

Hills like white elephants

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Pascal Cuestas Professor N. English 1301 27 March 2013 Hills Like White Elephants Feminist criticism Feminism's continual push for equality for men and women has grown and has become more successful. Women have abandoned the traditional roles of submissive housewives that was prevalent in the early 20th century. Early representations of women in literature were often stereotypical and unjust, but the characterization of women in literature has changed now.

However, in the early 1900s that type of writing was predominant, and Ernest Hemingway was a writer that definitely disregarded feminist concerns in his stories. Hemingway has several feminism concerns in "Hills like White Elephants", where he uses characterization and dialog to portray a powerful and controlling man who uses his authority to pressure his weak and indecisive girlfriend into making a decision that she does not want to do. "Hill Like White Elephants" written by Ernest Hemingway, revolves around a couple sitting and conversing at a train station.

The two have ordered a couple of beers and continue to make small talk. Their conversation seems casual at first but then turns tense when the American exposes the unspoken trouble between them. They begin to talk about whether or not Jig, the woman should have an "operation". It never clearly says what the operation is, but from various clues the reader can conclude that the operation that they are talking about is abortion. The American begins trying to convince the Jig to have an abortion.

He cunningly try's to comfort Jig by telling her that decision is totally up to her, but then tells her that he believes that the operation would be the best thing for the both of them. Jig can't seem to decide, but seems reluctant to

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go through with the operation. Feminist are troubled with literature under representing women. In the early 20th century, women were seen as inferior to men in society, and feminist want to step out and eliminate the undesirable portrayal of women.

In "Hills Like White Elephants", Hemingway portrays the American as an independent, knowledgeable, and composed man. He is the one who is in charge of the relationship and makes the decisions for the both of them. While Hemingway gives the man very admirable characteristics, he does the complete opposite with the female character Jig. Along with low self-esteem, Jig is indecisive, dependent, and ultimately portrayed as a very weak person. She is opposed to the idea of her getting an abortion, but is still willing to have the operation in order to please her man.

She is unable to stand up for herself and take charge of her life and eventually the man uses her weakness and his strengths to ultimately get his way. A major Feminist dispute is the portrayal of male dominance over women. One way Hemingway demonstrates male dominance and female submissiveness, is when Jig is asking the American "What should we drink?" (611). The man immediately orders two beers for the both of them, showing his dominance and the girl asking her boyfriend, demonstrates her submission. The man didn't even give the woman a chance to oppose his choice of beverage.

He wanted to drink beer, so he decided that she would drink it as well. Jig further supports her submissive nature by requesting permission from her boyfriend to try the drink "Anis del Toro." (612). The fact that she has to ask permission to do something as simple as trying a drink shows her role in the

relationship. When Hemingway's story gets to the topic of abortion, the male dominance of the American really starts to thrive. He doesn't want his girlfriend's pregnancy to change his lifestyle, so he tries to make her believe that the operation is a simple process. It's really an awfully simple operation, Jig" the man said, " Its not really an operation at all. "(613). This sentence shows us how manipulative and desperate the man is to convince this girl to have an abortion. He knows that if he shows a little compassion along with a pushy attitude, he can get his girlfriend to do what he wants; so he continues to pressure her. " I know you wouldn't mind it jig. It's really not anything. It's just to let the air in. "(613). Abortions may be a simple operation today, but it is doubtful to believe that they are as simple as the American is making it seem.

The American continues attempting to downplay the procedure and although Jig realizes this man is forcing her into a risky operation that she is unwilling to do, the man's dominance over the relationship and her helplessness to voice her opinion will probably lead her to eventually having the abortion. The girl is unable to effectively defy the man and try's to avoid confrontation, thereby adding to the feminism dispute of male dominance over woman. The way men treat women through dialog is another feminist concern. In " Hills like White Elephants", there are a lot of examples of males undermine and disregard women in a conversation.

After the two of them have a long argument, Jig becomes annoyed and wants to end the conversation. " Can't we maybe stop talking? "(614) the man immediately disregards her wishes and continues trying to push her into something that she does not want to do. She try's asking again, " Would

you please please please please please please please stop talking? "(615). Jig has asked a simple request, but the American disregards her wishes and continues to talk moments later. It is only until she threatens to scream that the man backs off a little.

The under representation of women and sexist overtone of this story is explanatory of the time in which it was written. " Hills like White Elephants" shows the stereotypical relationship between a man and a woman in the early 20th century. Through characterization, imagery, and dialog Hemingway shows male dominance over women and the submissiveness that women had in that time period. Works Cited Hemingway, Ernest. Hills Like White Elephants. Portable Legacies. Eds. Jan Zlontnick Schmidt, Lynne Crockett. Boston, MA: Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2012. 525-528. Print.