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Hemingway's Modern Woman: An Analysis of Selected Novels

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# Hemingway's Modern Woman: An Analysis of Selected Novels

## Introduction

The heroines in Ernest Hemingway's novels have consistently been misunderstood because critical studies have focused more on his depiction of strong, masculine heroes rather than the female protagonists. These women reflect the new generation born around 1895 who came to maturity during the Roaring Twenties. Writers and critics alike have commented only sparingly on the women and their lifestyle within the dramatic social changes unfolding. As a writer, Hemingway paved the way in portraying this generation, and more specifically in the depiction of the feminine struggle for identity. The heroines' struggle proved to be more complex and more intricate than portrayed by writers in the past.

While focusing on male bonding in war, during fishing trips, and at bullfights, Hemingway approached women's roles more cautiously. So, too, did critics who spotlighted the male while neglecting the role women played in an era of change. Hemingway's portrayal of the women of the Roaring Twenties was paradoxically shaped by his protagonist's psychological makeup. That makeup suggested a spirit of parity between the sexes as men discovered a means to acquire greater sensitivity and feelings and women found greater strength and intellectual assertiveness. A new, determined female emerged and challenged the Victorian ethos of restraint, frugality, and order.

Critics have recognized in Hemingway's male character a "code hero" who acknowledges that the old concepts and values no longer exist after the Great War. The innocent American boy in the early years of the 1900s who had grown up with President Theodore Roosevelt's ideals of honor and glory left for war only to return with a new set

of changed values and opinions learned from his experiences. The traditional distinctions between good and evil became lost, and the boy returned home as a man who attempted to explore life in order to forget a spiritually disastrous war. In order to forget the horrors of combat, he explored life while replacing the idealized beliefs of honor and glory with more concrete values that included good alcohol, good food, good sex, good travel, and good sports. Since the purpose of life itself became questionable during the war, the simple things and the immediate gratification of alcohol, food, sex, travel, and sports replaced most of the former ideals and became the testing ground in the protagonist's life. Hemingway depicted this man in characters such as Jake Barnes, Frederic Henry, Robert Jordan, and Colonel Cantwell. Despite the changes, or perhaps because of them, the Hemingway hero felt the need to pursue some goal or behavior that nevertheless remained elusive. With a sense of loyalty, an element of daring, and a tolerance for danger and the discomforts of life, the tough outdoors-man remained a psychologically wounded man who displayed a courage learned through his experiences and the solidarity of male bonding.

Critics quickly identified Hemingway's male protagonist as a strong individual whose new values allowed him to test his courage continually while he also privately reviews those actions. The forms of testing oftentimes were outside the social norms. Malcolm Cowley, for example, notes that the drinking of Hemingway's heroes constitutes their testing ground: "They drink early and late; they consume enough beer, wine, anis, grappa, and Fundador to put them all into alcoholic wards, if they were ordinary mortals; but drinking seems to have the effect on them of a magic potion" (43). Mark Spilka sees the male protagonist's form of testing differently with the hero's ability to tolerate

isolation as he faces rejection: “at best he is a restrained romantic, a man who carries himself well in the face of love’s impossibilities” (19). As Hemingway’s heroes confront Spilka’s “impossibilities,” their tolerance and stamina are strengthened in the face of uncertainty. Lionel Trilling observes another form of testing by which the Hemingway hero “wants only to feel emotions and ideals, or, as a technician and a brave man, to *do* what he is told” (79). Trilling continues: “it is the isolation of the individual ego in its search for experience” (80) that lives within the hero. Mimi Gladstein additionally notes that “Hemingway’s heroes follow certain ritualistic patterns in their search for initiation and meaning. . . . The focus is singularly masculine as the man goes through his testing ritual . . . that finds the hero either alone or dead” (49). Collectively, these studies show a new structure of values in a world devastated by the violence of the Great War. These critics have agreed that the male heroes play an important role in achieving “grace under pressure”; they also consistently viewed the heroines as “selfless, brave, and erotic” and “more faithful, more loving and more responsible” than the traditional Victorian “guardians of morality” (Allen 73).

In *The Sun Also Rises*, Brett Ashley, as one of the first Hemingway women brought up with Victorian ideals, breaks away from those standards into a modern era of changing values but remains caught in a whirlwind of indecision as she wanders aimlessly towards a questionable future. She has married in the traditional Victorian fashion and had a child, only to have to accept change after the war. In so doing, she portrays the traditional Victorian woman’s move into the modern era. Subsequent heroines in Hemingway’s work, however, establish their own self-directed resolutions in life rather than according to the social norm.

Recent critics look more closely at Hemingway's heroines than previous studies and draw attention towards the women's attitudes, actions, and functions within the novels. Lionel Trilling in his 1961 study points out that Hemingway's women consist of "essential innocence and responsive passion. Men and women's relationships reach their full development almost at the moment of the first meeting and are somehow completed as soon as begun" (81). John Atkins adds that the female protagonist faces a life of "aimlessness and destructiveness" under which a normally sensitive woman would either have suffered or become neurotic as she fought against social change through "the loosening of moral conduct and a tightening of emotional control" (237). Atkins also sees the heroine's ideal as being "selfless" service. In her 1983 study, Bernice Kert describes Hemingway's women as "selfless, brave, and erotic—part mother, part sexual partner" and joins Naomi Grant and Roger Whitlow in saying that "these ideal creatures are superior to his heroes—more faithful, more loving and more responsible" (218). Kert also explores the source of Hemingway's heroines, which involves significant women from his past. The heroines, she asserts, were a reflection of Hemingway's emotional state and the significant women in his life. James L. Light contends that Hemingway's heroine is emotionally and psychologically stronger than her male counterpart, one who possesses her own code, who "wishes to serve her lover and who sees in such service her personal substitute for conventional religion" (37). But Light's explanation leads one to assume the hero and heroine merge rather than stand equally side by side. Just after the turn of the century, the Victorian woman evolved into a determined heroine with her own set of values and ethics.

These critics, however, have generally overlooked both the growth of Brett Ashley, Catherine Barkley, Pilar, Maria, and Renata from their traumatic experiences to their psychological well-being and their progressive development within Hemingway's canon. Carlos Baker writes that Hemingway's women "are almost never at home; their virtue is that the best of them carry the home-image with them wherever they go" (122). The dominant elements of Hemingway's women are sexuality, isolation, and sacrifice. Rather than being passive and submissive, following or not following, loving or not loving, or even giving or not giving, Hemingway's modern women are independent in all aspects of their lives. They progressively grow and mature while remaining independent and free to make their own choices. Hemingway's heroines are rebels who transcend accepted patterns of female behavior of the Victorian era.

According to Victorian patriarchal ideals, women avoided any issues of sex and sexuality, and they guarded themselves against any temptation. Describing women's Victorian code of manners, Frederick Lewis Allen proposes,

Women were the guardians of morality; they were made of finer stuff than men and were expected to act accordingly. Young girls must look forward in innocence (tempered perhaps with a modicum of physiological instruction) to a romantic love match which would lead them to the altar and to living-happily-ever-after; and until the 'right man' came along they must allow no male to kiss them. (73)

These conventional stereotypes evolve after the war into liberated women who offer a wide spectrum of behaviors and expressions. There is no place or purpose for the new women; they choose independence and love despite the fact that they ultimately find only

isolation from their female peers as they psychologically support the men they love. In working towards their independence, the women follow their own unrestrained spirit of liberation. As one critic has correctly noted, a new generation of women were infected by the “eat-drink-and-be-merry-for-tomorrow-we-die spirit” (Allen 78) of the departing soldiers as well as by the need to question everything in life that was once true. As a consequence, it is impossible for these women to return to the Victorian sphere of an all-encompassing job as housewife. With her work now simplified through the wide range of available appliances, food preparation simplified with new products from canned goods to refrigerators, and electricity that kept homes cleaner, women were left with more time for leisure. Women developed a strong spirit of change exhibited in the leisurely lifestyle as they made choices within a society undergoing dramatic reconstruction. Brett Ashley in *The Sun Also Rises*, Catherine Barkley in *A Farewell to Arms*, Pilar and Maria in *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, and Renata in *Across the River and Into the Trees* all follow their own values because they lack other role models. In so doing, they introduce a new breed of women in an ever-changing new era.

Retaining their past emotional power, moreover, Hemingway's women not only grow stronger and more sensitive but also remain consistently dedicated, honest, and nurturing in the face of adversity. As a consequence of their own past, his heroines come to understand more fully what the hero experiences. Only recently has Mimi Gladstein alluded to this feature, noting simply that the Hemingway heroine is “a complex woman who has suffered much and endured. Her indestructible qualities are revealed as we become aware of her past” (61). The heroines' beliefs parallel those of Hemingway's hero: noble and determined in faith and supreme courage while enduring any and all



suffering without complaint. Femininity still exists with a devotion to fully loving a man, but the woman is now disciplined and honest with herself; she emerges from the influence of the war and the Victorian ideal of being confined and protected by a patriarchal family now responsible for herself in a calm and serene as well as courageous and strong manner.

With a common set of values, Victorians had a moral sense of life that was based on self-control and the belief in delayed gratification through strong Christian faith. The sentiment was to set one's standards morally high with Christ as model. Social morality required the promotion of restraint and order beneficial to the maintenance and improvement of society. While revolutionary changes occurred, outdated attitudes persisted until society was forced to face a transformed world reflected in literature such as Hemingway's. His work furnishes important material for the study of the art of life that grew more complicated in the modern era.

Having emerged himself from these restrictive ideals, Hemingway refuted many assumed stereotypical gender roles that governed his society and successfully shattered the idealized versions of womanhood. Modern women's ability to share equally with men in formulating values played an important role in that era as Hemingway reflected in his novels. They progressively became freer to explore the world outside their domestic domain. The changing beliefs, thoughts, and actions of the new generation of women were acknowledged in 1924 with the appearance of *Our Changing Morality: A Symposium*:

Women are for the first time demanding to live the forbidden experiences directly and draw conclusions on this basis. . . . The great difference today

lies in the open defiance of these customs with feelings of entire justification, or even a non-recognition of a necessity for justification. In other words, there has arisen a feeling of moral rightness in the present conduct, and wrongness in the former morality. (Kirchwey 247-248)

The Hemingway heroine follows her own code of defying the social norms that formerly dictated certain customs and actions of restraint. In presenting his women, Hemingway reflected the vital changes occurring within their lives.

Hemingway revealed the modern woman's particular problem in a changing world of industrialization. Women originally found their self-worth only in those home activities which centered their lives. A number of forces, however, were working against Victorian family life; the old way of life was disappearing. Phones were ringing everywhere, and automobiles replaced the horse and buggy in small towns. During Hemingway's youth, his parents introduced technology in their house in Oak Park, Illinois: electricity, a washing machine, vacuum cleaner, and even hair dryers (Reynolds, *Young Hemingway* 7). Commuter trains were presenting city life with its unconventional entertainment to local towns and villages. An editorial in the local newspaper focused on the disreputable influence of those changes occurring in the city:

We boast that we have no saloons, no gambling dens and no other resorts of iniquity. But as a matter of fact we have all of these things in a form that makes them vastly more dangerous than if they were flaunted openly in Oak Park territory. . . . Not only are there a half dozen saloons in this corner of Forest Park that live on Oak Park patronage, and that means largely the patronage of Oak Park young men and boys but three of these

saloons on our very border maintain the worst sort of gambling joints, in which scores, if not hundreds, of Oak Park school boys are being ruined.

(Reynolds, *Young Hemingway* 9)

Communities were changing at such an expeditious pace that Americans were hard-pressed to adjust accordingly. The shift in beliefs and faith appeared confused and questionable because meaning or purpose became lost. In a society growing increasingly complex, young men and women were restless and clearly looking for something more out of life than previous generations.

In addition to technological innovations, the war brought the influence of continental standards with their libertine attitudes and unrestrained lifestyles, and which questioned everything vital to the center of family life. Mothers now rallied to deal with such pressing new social problems as Prohibition, the automobile as a “house of prostitution on wheels” (Allen 83), the magazines that stressed sex and titillating confessions, and the movies. Moreover, the right to vote changed women’s outlook forever. Ronald L. Davis indicates that “The winning of the suffrage had its effect. It consolidated woman’s position as man’s equal” (14). Robbed of their vital role as moral guardians by social changes, women attempted to escape life’s frustrations. Their desire for more freedom of choice in activities outside the home occurred when the onset of new technology replaced many of their household responsibilities.

For the younger generation, the change in ethics became the force working against the Victorian family lifestyle; they blatantly adopted cigarettes, liquor, automobiles, and stylish new modes of dress (Allen 73). The influence of continental manners and standards without the restrictive factors of Victorian social rules brought about the natural

breakdown of traditional restraints for American girls who served as nurses and war workers. That breakdown led to the exploration of other occupations for women as well as to the unknown world of sex and power. Women sought economic independence that led to a freer lifestyle largely restricted by Victorian society.

Once emancipated, women found they had extra time and energy even after working outside the home. This excess energy turned into a woman's commitment to the man she loved, a commitment which took the form of sex as the central and pervasive force. Hemingway's heroine centers her life on the solitary lifestyle of the hero. Through her dedication, the female brings psychological and spiritual benefits to the male character as well as the physical aspects of love.

Victorian attitudes taught that masculinity was vitally important to a man's character, which led to his creating a virile public image to avoid appearing weak and effeminate. Hemingway was raised to project a strong aura of masculinity while the desires and expectations of women were passive and deferential. Using the ideals expected in the male, Hemingway expanded women's image. Women's sexuality became more apparent in the years of change after the War. From one critic's point of view, change was rapid: "After hundreds of years of mild compliance to wifely duties, modern women have awakened to the knowledge that they are sexual beings. . . . The Victorian moral code did not permit respectable middle-class women to admit to sexual appetites" (Dumemil 131).

While Hemingway provided the opportunity for both genders to discuss sex, he stressed that this form of communication led to a stronger and more vital woman. He consistently presented in his fiction the ideal woman who combined the strong

characteristics of his mother with his own fantasies of docile, long-legged, blonde beauties who submit with desire and obedience to a man's every whim. This combination led to his portrayal of the new determined woman of the modern era. By creatively manifesting the modern women of the twentieth century, Hemingway shows females who share the same male ideals of courage and an unconcern for disaster and who view these traits as moral virtues.

Following the example of strong, experienced enduring males, the female protagonists gain from the unique trials and challenges in their lives. In an era of change, the women were the first to develop a new set of values and attitudes. As David Shannon notes,

[m]uch of the change in manners can be explained in terms of feminism, the gradual adoption of a single standard of conduct by middle-class urban girls. If society was not shocked by the young men's drinking, smoking cigarettes, and general lack of parental control, feminist young women figured they too should have a similar freedom. . . . Indeed, the fashions and ideal feminine types of the 1920's suggest that feminine equality rather than sex was the main factor in changing manners. (Kirchwey 286)

Individually the women rejected traditional social convention while seeking their own personal identity. They became survivors with a strong charisma that allowed them to stand apart from others, much like the Hemingway heroes. The modern woman is introduced with a sense of confidence and stamina to life's changes. These fictional women served to depict social changes that were being introduced from Paris and that consisted of new styles and fashions. Malcolm Cowley reported during the Jazz Age

“that young men in Greenwich Village were talking, walking, and shadowboxing like Hemingway, and young women from the eastern colleges were modeling themselves after Brett Ashley” (196).

In taking the risk to write about taboo subjects, such as sex, Hemingway not only opened new fictional territory but also redefined manhood as well as women’s role in a changing era. Men and women were both attempting to confront not only the industrial changes affecting their lives but also the social changes in order to remain strong and confident.

Hemingway challenged antiquated ideals in a changing world through his literature. Through his desire to be a “man’s man,” an expert sportsman, and the wise “Papa,” he became America’s cultural icon who portrayed in his fiction a powerful heroine interacting with the male protagonist who represented the new society. In doing so, he showed the growth of women and their influence in a male-dominated world of change. With Brett Ashley in *The Sun Also Rises*, a new unconstrained woman emerges who cannot find the route to her own well-being. She wanders independently through life, attempting to discover some purpose after the war within the dramatic social changes. In *A Farewell to Arms*, Catherine Barkley progresses from the aimless wandering of Brett to an independent woman who is psychologically frail but who knows what needs to be accomplished in order to restore balance to her life. In *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, Hemingway moves away from Catherine’s frailty as feminine strength is depicted through Pilar and Maria, who face death and grow stronger through sheer will power, struggling for survival in such a way that they remain self-reliant and free. In the final step towards power and independence, Hemingway’s women progress from a

physical to a more meaningful therapeutic love with Renata in *Across the River and Into the Trees*. She can gently reject the mentality of the death-seeking hero by offering an alternative, sharing his vision and giving the noble gift of self before moving on. As social and ideological factors change, Hemingway's work and characters evolve.

Examined together, these novels reveal the progressive development of each heroine as she evolves as an individual. In doing so, they also reveal how Hemingway used significant women in his life as models for these heroines. The idealization of his first love, Agnes von Kurowsky, and of his first wife, Hadley Richardson, along with a complex and psychological perspective of his mother, Grace Hemingway, combine to become the model for his heroines. While resenting his dominating mother, he also admired strong, active women who were ironically like her. Their skills for sustaining others led to dedication, honesty, loyalty, devotion, and selflessness that defied convention while exhibiting a self-sufficiency and determination to love and nurture their hero. With their determined air, critics tended to label Hemingway's heroines as shrewish or, in their faithfulness to the hero, viewed them as suckers being duped. They failed to recognize these traits for what they were—concerted efforts by the heroine at self-preservation of her freedom and of the independence that she had found from her traumatic past. Brett Ashley from *The Sun Also Rises* poignantly remarks, "My God! the things a woman goes through" (188). Intuitively daring to start over after the death of a loved one, Catherine Barkley in *A Farewell to Arms* bravely notes, "This is a rotten game we play, isn't it? . . . Please let's not lie when we don't have to. I had a very fine little show and I'm all right now. You see I'm not mad and I'm not gone off. It's only a little sometimes" (31). Radically changed by their brush with death, Maria and Pilar in *For*

*Whom the Bell Tolls* present parallel images of survival for the immature and mature woman in war. Maria proves through her personal relationship with Robert Jordan that she has found a new sense of proportion regarding the essential things in life, and Pilar proves to be the pillar of strength on which the men can depend to remain steadfast in their belief in the Republic. And in *Across the River and Into the Trees*, Renata, an independent young teenager, shows compassion and maturity when she gives the much-needed psychological peace that a retired Colonel cannot achieve for himself, quietly asking: "Wouldn't you tell me about them [decisions]? I would like to have a share in your sad trade" (91). Through sharing life's challenges with honesty and courage, Hemingway's women exhibit progressive development in an era of change.

These women were so different from their Victorian upbringing that they mystified society. Critics have not significantly discussed the fact that the women in Hemingway's relationships played a major role as models for his female characters, specifically his mother, Grace Hemingway; his first love, Agnes von Kurowsky; and his first wife, Hadley Richardson.

Hemingway's upbringing was largely imbued with the Victorian culture of his mother whose highly conservative and moralistic values influenced her son. Under the influence of President Theodore Roosevelt, parents were urged to

bring up their children not to shirk difficulties, but to meet them and overcome them; not to strive after a life of ignoble ease, but to strive to do their duty . . . and this duty must inevitably take the shape of work in some form or other. . . . the laws of work is the fundamental law of our being.

(Reynolds, *Young Hemingway* 29)



Hemingway's parents were no different from other parents in raising their children as hard working and responsible adults. As a buoyant, self-assured woman, Grace Hemingway earned money from her career teaching music in order to hire her own servants, cook, and nanny, money that allowed her the time to pursue her own professional interests. Her monetary independence, though, did not typify the Victorian mother. She reflected the ideals of the modern woman with her independence and unconventional methods in raising her family.

In May 1920, Grace, with intuitive psychological insight, believed that the idleness Hemingway demonstrated led to his emotional instability. She noted to her daughter, "Ernest is very like me. . . . When [he] gets through his period . . . of fighting himself and everybody else, and turns his energy toward something positive, he will be a fine man" (Kert 71). Seeing her son's professional writing as anything but dependable, Grace worried about his lack of purpose, berating his rudeness, carelessness, and unwillingness to remain at a paying job. Since Hemingway could barely tolerate any criticism whatsoever, his interpretation of her disapproval eventually turned to hatred. Believing he needed guidance, however, Grace continued to reprimand him about his careless comings and goings. In the summer of 1920, she wrote her son what critics refer to as her "bankruptcy" letter, itemizing an overdrawn emotional account that mentioned the obligations Hemingway had to his father. Hemingway came to believe his parents had driven him away from a life with his family. He voiced his reaction to his friend Howell Jenkins: "Having been barred from my domicile I know not where I will linger in Chicago" (Mellow 125-126). Hemingway, like his mother, needed to be assertive and

dominant rather than soothed and sheltered. His relationship with her was interpreted by Nancy Comley and Robert Scholes:

Mummy as emotional banker, domineering spouse, and best girl were three maternal modes familiar to Ernest Hemingway as he grew up. All of them made him uneasy, and so did a fourth mode: Mummy as nurturer, as keeper of the breast upon which he was once utterly dependent. (31)

While making more money from teaching music than her doctor husband earned from his profession, Grace appeared to manipulate her husband in order to obtain her every wish, especially after receiving her inheritance that she used towards her dream house. The move to a new house appeared to set up a financial trap that led to her husband's anxiety about life, which ultimately resulted in his suicide. Knowing his mother opposed smoking, drinking, and cursing, Hemingway, in retaliation, sought to exhibit his own free will by doing just those things. His resentment of a dominating mother, combined with his overall desire for strong, active women as companions and lovers, who were ironically like his mother, contributed to his fictional women. With determination and strength derived from his mother, Hemingway's modern women slowly emerge. The new twentieth-century woman became more experimental and sexually active than her previous Victorian counterpart.

While Hemingway may have attacked his own mother's manipulation and domination over his father, another influential woman provided the care and the devotion he found desirable. Agnes von Kurowsky was the nurse who cared for him when he was critically wounded in the war and who was kind, quick, intelligent, and sensitive to her patient's moods. She was also strongly drawn to Hemingway's charisma. According to

Jeffrey Meyers, she “first taught him, when he was young and vulnerable, to accept the care and protection of a woman. . . . With Agnes, Hemingway also established a pattern of falling in love during war” (41). The picture that emerges of Agnes is of a woman interested in the world who possessed an unfailing sense of humor and who was mischievous while enjoying the admiration of men. That humor and enjoyment are distinctive in Hemingway’s portrayal of Lady Brett Ashley, who traveled extensively and explored the more forbidden activities of the Jazz Age.

With the outbreak of the war in Europe, Agnes restlessly turned away from her library work for excitement and adventure in nursing. As a fellow Red Cross driver, Henry Villard reiterated Hemingway’s vision of Agnes’ kind and sensitive nature as well as a sense of humor that reflected Hemingway’s own mischievous ways. While she found Hemingway immature but “interesting” and “liked him without being in love,” she believed the seven years age difference too difficult for a relationship with Hemingway (Villard and Nagel 40-41). Suffering from insomnia, Hemingway naturally found Agnes as the night nurse readily available and good company to talk to as they sat in his hospital room. She wrote in her diary, “He is adorable & we are very congenial in every way. I’m getting confused in my heart and mind I don’t know how I’ll end it [sic]. Still, I came over here for work & until the war is over I won’t be able to do anything foolish, which is lucky for me” (72-73). With her fear of Hemingway’s anger and jealousy, Agnes lost her nerve to break off their relationship. In her diary, she noted that he “speaks in such a desperate way every time I am cool, that I dare not dampen his ardor as long as he is here in the Hospital” (73). Bernice Kert explored the vast difference in their views of the relationship:

In the Milan hospital setting, where most of the patients imagined themselves in love with her, she had been crisply unsentimental, striking a careful balance between professionalism and intimacy. But the romantic wartime atmosphere exerted its effect, and Ernest was different from the others. . . . Nurse von Kurowsky was interested in young Hemingway. For Ernest, the relationship with Agnes was the crowning experience of an extraordinary year. It was the first time he was in love, and the fact that the object of his passion was pretty and accomplished and seven years older fed his ego. (57-58)

Sending him home with the promise to follow at a later date, Agnes eventually ended their relationship by letter. While she was self-sufficient as a career woman, her nurturing and protective qualities remained paramount to Hemingway's future relationships even though he was deeply hurt by her rejection. Villard recognizes her serious impact on Hemingway because of "the fact that Ernie had in his possession three of her letters until the day of his death [, which] showed that he had not forgotten" (45). At an impressionable time in his life, Hemingway romantically attached womanhood to this lovely, pert woman in white.

The final influence on Hemingway's image of womanhood was his first wife, Hadley Richardson, who possessed a small inheritance which he used with her blessing. Hadley was, like Grace Hemingway and Agnes von Kurowsky, economically independent and emotionally and psychologically confident. Finding her unselfish love like no other woman's, Hemingway was never hostile or bitter towards Hadley and remained close to her even after their divorce. Taking a sophisticated and modern view of women's

equality well before their marriage, she confidently discussed with Hemingway the importance of the physical aspects of a couple's union. Once married, Hadley accompanied Hemingway in climbing peaks, drinking beer, skiing down snow-covered mountains, and fishing. In managing their lives, Hadley gave Hemingway all the freedom he craved. With a talent for listening and the intuitiveness to sense Hemingway's moods, she accepted each challenge he threw her way. Edmund Wilson critically suggested that a "wholesome and level-headed" Hadley was the ideal wife for a posturing Hemingway (Kert 89). Every letter she wrote emphasized how important his writing was to her. Hadley firmly believed "His ambition must be their guide" (Kert 90). Most beguiling was her devotion, belief in his abilities, and trust. The first challenge to their idyllic lifestyle was the prospect of parenthood. She quietly managed Hemingway's domestic life, a fact that kept him stable. Hadley, in her naiveté, however, seemed oblivious to the devastating determination of another woman who would destroy their marriage and become Hemingway's second wife. Remaining strong, patient, and loving throughout their separation and divorce, Hadley continued to support him as a surrogate mother for the rest of his life. Bernice Kert has argued that Hadley "believed that he was right for her and repaid him over and over, in loyalty and good spirits and a remarkable selflessness, qualities that he came to demand of his friends and especially his wives" (116). With her demure and loving attitude, Hemingway remained faithful in his praise and perceptions of her generosity, support, and loveliness well after their divorce. His relationship with Hadley set up Hemingway's pattern for the obedient and kind woman depicted in his novels; she reaffirms the female ability to cope with life as their roles change.

Hemingway completely and consciously set the standards from which the new determined woman's life and relations follow. Drawn towards the stronger, more active, and independent types normally looked down upon by a traditional society, Hemingway combined these features with the role assigned women by a patriarchal society as nurturer to complete the image of his modern woman. He created stories interwoven with his own experiences and the significant women in his life.

*The Sun Also Rises, A Farewell to Arms, For Whom the Bell Tolls, and Across the River and Into the Trees* all present women who discover a way to meet their own needs and desires. By contrast, Hemingway reveals their male counterparts as men who find their rewards in life only through the determination and assistance of the new modern woman. While the women remain strong in a man's world, they ironically gain ground with their financial and sexual freedoms that include choosing to share all they have in life.

## Chapter I

“Women made such swell friends”:

Brett Ashley in *The Sun Also Rises*

Mislabeled due to her unconventional lifestyle, Brett Ashley has been misinterpreted by such critics as Philip Young and John Aldridge, who describe her as a “compulsive bitch” (24). Critics also rely on Brett’s own declaration for their interpretation when she refers to herself as “one of the bitches” (Hemingway, *Sun Also Rises* 247). Rather than the bitchiness considered by critics, however, she exhibits an adolescent immaturity as she drinks and fornicates in *The Sun Also Rises*. Through her experiences she portrays the new woman of the Hemingway novels who exists on determination and a strong will. In an era of skepticism and lost faith, Brett Ashley is one of “the lost generation” who has rejected traditional American and British conventions for the more appealing—and freer—lifestyle of Paris’ Left Bank.

A number of years after the publication of his first novel, Hemingway recalled, “Memory is apt to tell us that Brett is simply a woman who has slept too easily with too many men and lost all normal feeling and self-respect” (Atkins 234). Other critics found motives to explain her actions by considering the changes in a post-war world as well as her past history. John Adkins says “she is a convenient symbol of the expatriot woman of the ‘twenties, with no purpose in her life, and attempting to fill the void with drink and sex” (234). Jackson Benson simply explains she is “a female who never becomes a woman” (30). A. Walton Litz and Molly Weigel acknowledge that “Brett is sexually promiscuous, but she has reasons. . . . Brett is a victim of the war” (178). During the war,

her first love died of dysentery and her present husband became so psychologically marred that he slept with a loaded revolver, a situation in which she felt threatened. As a volunteer during the war, she met and fell in love with another damaged individual, Jake Barnes, whose injury left him impotent. Escaping the influence of war, Brett rejects traditional Victorian ideals and lifestyles to explore a new world of sex and power while she pursues her own personal interests. In shattering stereotypical attitudes, she experiences her own unique trials and challenges to survive an era transforming dramatically.

While critics have labeled Brett Ashley “bitchy,” they have failed to acknowledge that her actions are those of a shattered and thoughtless young girl who never grows up. Her actions and personal code of conduct counter that label. Arthur Waldhorn sets Brett apart as the original rebel within Hemingway’s canon by asserting, “Brett is not, like Catherine Barkley in *A Farewell to Arms*, Maria in *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, or Renata in *Across the River and Into the Trees*, a prototypic mistress—soft, yielding, long-haired. But neither is she a prototypic bitch” (108-109). Brett bravely survives the disruption of her life and exposure to social change and confronts women’s changing role in a post-war era. She replaces religion with her own code of conduct by “deciding not to be a bitch” (Hemingway, *Sun Also Rises* 249) as she faces social challenges.

Brett exhibits a woman’s special persuasive power over men through her exceptional sex appeal and attractiveness. With her bobbed hair and association with all types of men, she remains a steadfast companion to all males. When her true friend, love, and male counterpart, Jake, introduces her, saying, “Brett was damned good-looking” (29), another friend, Robert Cohn, also mesmerized, states, “She’s a remarkably



attractive woman. . . . There's a certain quality about her, a certain fineness. She seems to be absolutely fine and straight. . . . I don't know how to describe the quality, I suppose it's breeding" (46). Every significant male character in the novel comments on her beauty. Bill Gorton remarks, "Beautiful lady" (80), and later observes, "She's damned nice" (81), while Mike Campbell says and continually reiterates throughout the novel, "Brett, you *are* a lovely piece. Don't you think she's beautiful?" (85). Interspersed with their comments, Jake repeatedly describes her looks and dress: "She wore a slipover jersey sweater and a tweed skirt, and her hair was brushed back like a boy's. She started all that. She was built with curves like the hull of a racing yacht, and you missed none of it with that wool jersey (29-30). Many of the comments that these men make result from their infatuation with her beauty and her fun-loving nature. She is appealingly bright, beautiful, and sexy.

Aside from her appealing looks, however, her interactions with others remain adolescent with the exception of Jake. The opening of the novel poignantly establishes the thoughtlessness of the major characters as they continually bicker about trivial concerns. With his fawning attitude, Cohn is snubbed when asking her to dance, and she not only lies childishly, "I've promised to dance this with Jacob" (30) but also later exclaims impulsively when he leaves her, "My God! I'm so sick of him" (185). Her general reactions to men other than Jake reflect a nonchalance as, for example, when she notes, "Funny, I haven't thought about him [her fiancé] for a week" (69). Her indifference to men in general and her adolescent behavior derive from the physical limitations of loving Jake. By disregarding dates and repeatedly telling stories of her affairs with other men, she immaturely continues her emotional floundering. However,

Brett is only reflecting the loose relationships and responsibilities that the era dictated, and she is merely thoughtless rather than cruel. As a woman whose life has been determined by the impact of a devastating war, she cannot find the route to self-love, which results in a consistent course towards self-destruction. The search for self-love anticipates the major heroine in *A Farewell to Arms*, Catherine Barkley, whose psychological strength allows her to re-direct herself towards some purpose in life rather than Brett's aimless wandering from one affair to another.

When friends converge in drunken disarray outside a café in anticipation of the festival and bullfights, Brett naively reveals her concern for a friend's drunkenness. She urges Mike Campbell to describe what happened in the court. When he responds, "I don't remember. . . . I was just a little tight," she counters with emphatic disbelief: "Tight! . . . You were blind!" (141). Even her nonchalant attitude towards marriage is youthfully irresponsible. Asked when she is getting married, her reply is, "How do I know? As soon as we get the divorce. Michael's trying to get his mother to put up for it" (69). Concerning another of Brett's infatuations, Michael later notes, "I believe, you know, that she's falling in love with this bull-fighter chap" (172). Brett's own reaction is one of adolescent fawning. She admiringly says, "My God! he's a lovely boy" (181). In her own unconventional manner, Brett retains her sense of humor and mischievous attitude while she enjoys men's attentions even as she disregards traditional values from the past.

With Brett's sexual appeal and attractiveness, she gives reason for her rude and "bitchy" reactions when some characters expect physical reciprocity for their affection. Well known by her group of friends, she never becomes emotionally involved with men

other than Jake. Robert Cohn's blatant admiration as well as her obvious flirtatious nature are evident to everyone except Cohn. By not going anywhere alone, she follows her own conduct of decorum, utilizing Cohn's interest by having him accompany her out of town. Thinking "it would be good for him" (107) only makes matters worse for Cohn, but Brett remains unaffected by the relationship since she is only satisfying his needs. However, she begins having problems with Cohn's obsession. Mike recalls, "He [Cohn] was an ass, though. He came down to San Sebastian where he damn well wasn't wanted. He hung around Brett and just *looked* at her" (147). Brett agrees, "He did behave very badly" (147). It is common knowledge that Brett has affairs with men and then talks about them. She has never had anyone continuously ogling her as Cohn does. With all the other companions discouraging his attitude and actions, he still persists: "He could not stop looking at Brett. It seemed to make him happy" (150). Brett dramatically and abruptly reacts in order to remedy the situation. Critics focus on Cohn's obsessive behavior and Brett's reference to herself as "one of those bitches" (247) rather than what actually occurs—self-preservation of her own freedom and independence. She believes there are certain standards by which one must live, an attitude reflected in many of the relationships she develops. As part of her independent nature, she is also particular about not taking money from men, including Count Mippipopolous, who offers her ten thousand dollars to accompany him to Biarritz. Jake explicitly points out the value of Brett as a friend, saying, "Women made such swell friends" (152). For him friendship was similar to marriage but without the lifetime commitment. He even blatantly notes, "I had not been thinking about her side of it. I had been getting something for nothing" (152). Jake plays an important role in Brett's life—as friend, confidant, love, and relief

from the stress of life. Through Jake, Hemingway stresses Brett's position as a special woman and character in the novel whose values differ from those values of the past.

Similar to the Hemingway hero, Brett lives up to standards and has her own ethical system of honor that includes her own quality of "grace under pressure." After their liaison, Cohn assumes he will have a traditional relationship where they remain a couple while Brett sees their affair as just one more sexual encounter. In overcoming the outmoded traditional values, Brett becomes a model for Hemingway's fictional women. Expectations were in transition and vastly different from the Victorian morality with which Brett grew up. Exhibiting her frustration with the continual changes from the traditional dicta to the avant garde, Brett poignantly exclaims, "My God! the things a woman goes through" (188). Power over the trivial issues is construed as success in the sexual and social games, but that success also leads to her isolation. She remains loyal, daring, and tolerant through her various experiences and associations.

Brett seeks a peace and happiness that continually evade her as she establishes a new role for women in the modern era. Perhaps thoughtlessly, she still retains special feelings for Jake when she says lovingly at the novel's conclusion, "Oh Jake, we could have had such a damned good time together" (251). This repeated participation in each other, the touch and the whispered declarations, continues to spark their feels for one another and is the closest they will ever come to the sexual act. That whisper of loneliness and regret for something lost echoes through Brett's dialogues and effectively overshadows the strength found in her will power and determination in facing life's changes and challenges. But she is more empowered than her Victorian predecessors.

There is something else about Brett reminiscent of the past. Significant women in Hemingway's life collectively provide the basis for her portrayal. Grace Hemingway was, as one of the first modern women to escape the restraint and order of the Victorian age, the epitome of the ambitious and defiant young women who were then emerging. She found society's discernible differences between the sexes intolerable, such as the right to explore the world, and the freedom to dress and act as one wishes without the strict rules of decorum. Considered improper and bizarre behavior for women, for example, Grace nevertheless dressed in her brother's pants to ride a bicycle. This same determination to challenge life's inequality led to her different attitudes. Grace selectively displayed the religious and social values that respected faith, order, and self-control. In addition, she promoted a career as a successful music teacher and traveled extensively, activities which broadened her experiences and perceptions allowing her to assertively make her own financial decisions whether they involved a house being built with every modern convenience or the funding for her husband's post-graduate courses to further his career. She became the principle breadwinner, which resulted in her husband surrendering to her domination within the family. Believing she came from a distinguished family and was an opera singer whose career was cut short by fate, Grace admitted to her daughter, "some women cling to their husband and their children. They want to possess them. . . . others like to share their abilities and their interests, but they need solitude and communion with God—the source. I think I am one of these people" (Mellow 103). So as one progressively modern in her interests and actions, Grace Hemingway became a significant model for Hemingway's fictional woman who struggles for a new role within society.

Mirroring Hemingway's mother, Brett escapes the restraint and order of Victorian teaching by challenging life's inequality between the sexes. She exhibits the new breed of young people and their rebellious nature through her unpretentious sensual indulgence as an expatriot in Paris in the twenties. But similar to Grace Hemingway, Brett manipulates her own unconventional financial independence. Morally independent but financially dependent upon each monthly check, Brett lives between extravagance and frugality, a situation which reflects the early lifestyle of Hemingway's mother. Specifically, Brett's sophistication and modern air of independence and assertiveness are similar to Grace Hemingway. Educated and tied to nobility, Brett, as Lady Ashley, reflects Grace's own education and belief in her high breeding as one "born of a race of gentlemen" (Lynn 118). Brett, just as Grace, broadens her own life through significant experiences and extensive travels through Europe. As a woman who demonstrates self-possession, an indefinable air of breeding, and a natural style characteristic of the progressive modern woman, Brett is suggestively like Grace Hemingway. But just as Grace was not taken seriously by her husband, Clarence, or her son, Ernest, Brett's restlessness stereotypically leads others to view her as frivolous and pretentious. Grace's rebellious tendency to escape society's expectations evidences how rapidly the thinking was changing for the upcoming fashionable generation in a new era.

The fashionable generation of women, represented by Brett, flirt freely but refuse to be tied down as the excitement and adventure sought in a foreign land suggest yet another significant woman—Agnes von Kurowsky. Far from being sophisticated, her immaturity as well as her obvious beauty captured the admiration of her patients. Agnes said that being employed in the catalogue department of Carnegie Library was "too slow

and uneventful, so I went into training as a nurse” (Villard and Nagel 28). Henry Villard, one of her patients, found that due to Agnes’ gay and charming manners as well as her curiosity and bearing, “the entire place seemed to brighten because of her presence” (14). She remained conscious of propriety at all times, keeping in mind the uncertainty of her future as a wartime nurse. In her capacity as a night nurse, she was tenderly solicitous of her patients by remaining uncommitted in matters of love. After a date with an aggressive soldier, she would not go out alone during the war, saying, “we have to travel in pairs, you know” (33). Her cool reassurance and composure made Agnes’ presence important for those so far away from home. But due to her smoking, another nurse considered Agnes “wild but intriguing” (Kert 61), while Agnes confessed, “I was looking for adventure . . . and I was very fickle” (Kert 63). Her unrestrained attitude is noted further when she learned a new gambling game where she felt “very *cattava* [wicked]” (Mellow 95). But far from being wicked, Agnes remained level-headed in her quest for adventure. She was keenly interested in people and the world around her, but she was also grounded in her nursing responsibilities, realizing that any inappropriate behavior would be reason enough for the authorities to send her back to the States. While changes in morals and manners were progressing faster than social rules and regulations, an immature but rapidly developing Agnes respectfully kept her curiosity and flirtatious nature under control.

Brett, like Agnes, remains aloof while half the men around her believe they are in love with her. She reflects the attention Agnes maintained with her warm disposition as she experimented with her feminine wiles. Brett’s own nursing talents during the war, moreover, mirror those of Agnes. Her attentive attitude is reflective of Agnes’ presence

among men, attracting attention wherever she worked. Brett clearly duplicates Agnes' enjoyment of the night but leaves her likeness behind when she ventures forth as other expatriots in her evening excursions through Paris, drinking and dancing as a means of escaping life's responsibilities. Emulating Agnes' desire for adventure, Brett flaunts the new manners and values of the modern woman by dancing with homosexuals and rough soldiers. The new women, in Agnes fashion, flirt freely without commitment, which adds to their adventurous feelings of freedom and independence. Through her cool composure, Brett could experiment, like Agnes, with her power of persuasion and feminine tricks. Since Agnes was conscious of the rules and regulations of nursing in and out of the hospital environment, Brett shows her personal form of propriety with her decision to always travel in the company of another rather than alone. Brett is optimistic and determined like Grace Hemingway just as she is rejuvenated and adventurous like Agnes von Kurowsky.

But Brett shows another side of her personality when she is around Jake Barnes. Her level-headedness and trusting manner reflect yet another significant woman—Hadley Richardson, Hemingway's first wife. She first appeared to Hemingway as sturdy and handsome rather than beautiful, and she was just as determined and resourceful as Grace Hemingway. Bernice Kert acknowledges that "everyone respected Hadley, recognizing that her quiet management of his domestic life contributed to Ernest's stability" (147). Neither coy nor prudish, she could discuss the physical aspects of their relationship calmly and confidently even before their wedding. After being convinced by a domineering family that she was physically as well as psychologically fragile, Hadley revealed that she was all too willing to do and be what Hemingway wanted while they



actively traveled and explored Europe following their marriage. She would willingly lead a physically challenging lifestyle in Hemingway's company. Always enduring and patient, Hadley would also sympathetically but firmly counsel Hemingway through his insecurities and occasional depressions. Her caring nature remained constant as Hemingway's most faithful and enduring supporter both in his career and for his psychological well-being. Intuitive to Hemingway's uncertainty and dependence upon women, Hadley's feminine, nurturing skills remained constant as she honestly acknowledged and dismissed their eight-year age difference as meaningless. She fully trusted her fiancé enough to share her inheritance and frequently bolstered his spirits, thus balancing a marriage where she was his emotional and financial equal.

Brett is quietly efficient in her Hadley-like ability to build upon a man's ego with an air of naiveté that parallels her strength and ability to be coy. Brett shows her Hadley side with her willingness to support a man's well-being through her emotional as well as physical love. She gravitates towards Jake for understanding and a sense of oneness after each of her sexual encounters; in so doing, Brett exhibits Hadley's own commitment to and support of her soul mate. With her quiet management of her fiancé, Brett mirrors Hadley's relationship with Hemingway as she actively travels and explores Europe. Reminiscent of Hadley's age difference to Hemingway, moreover, thirty-six-year-old Brett thinks nothing of a tryst with Padro Romero, a nineteen-year-old lover. Even with her many liaisons with other men, Brett, in her own fashion, remains faithful and enduring with Jake. Just as honest as Hadley, Brett can discuss the physical aspects of all her relationships openly as in her discussion with Jake and Michael concerning her liaison with Robert Cohn (Hemingway, *Sun Also Rises* 147-148). In sharing her thoughts,

feelings, and dreams, so much like Hadley, Brett's honesty brings equality to a relationship. Critics, however, have largely asserted another woman as the basis for Hemingway's depiction of Brett Ashley.

According to Bernice Kert, Hemingway's "rendition of Brett Ashley remained faithful to her prototype, Duff Twysden—in appearance, the details of her disorderly life, and much of her personality" (167). Kert explains further that Duff's physical relationships were much like Brett Ashley's with a "talent for satisfying her partners [which] was considerable" (158). Duff believed "husbands were not fair game, [and always] would respect the code" (158). Kenneth Lynn, moreover, asserts that "Left Bank readers in 1926 gleefully assumed that . . . Jake Barnes was Hemingway, Brett Ashley was Duff Twysden, . . . and so on" (296), while James Mellow concludes, "Duff would become Brett Ashley, the most elusive, gratifying, and perverse of Hemingway's fictional heroines: 'damned good-looking,' stylish rather than fashionable in her jersey sweaters and tweed skirts, her hair brushed back like a boy's" (291). However, although Brett's flirtation is as promiscuous as Duff's, it is nowhere as near as sexual. Therefore, her relationships are more characteristic of Agnes than Lady Duff Twysden.

Since Hemingway's fascination for Lady Duff was short-lived, any influence with regard to his overall outlook on women must have been established earlier, which is an accumulated version of Hemingway's significant women. Michael Reynolds contends, "Majority opinion says that Duff never let Ernest into her bed that spring or summer. Instead she used him to pick up bar tabs he could not afford, scrawling emergency messages: 'Please do come come [sic] at once to Jimmie's Bar - real trouble - Just rung up Parnass and find no word from you. S.O.S. Duff'" (Reynolds, *The Paris Years* 289).

She would not be a major influence on Hemingway since she only flirted and used him without fulfilling any physical fantasies he may have harbored. With the fascination of a boldly dramatic woman, Hemingway would install Lady Duff and her antics only within the pages of his first successful novel as the prototype to Brett Ashley. Duff's instinctive habits were very much like those of Hemingway and his fellow expatriots—the very qualities he admired in a man—defiance of others' supremacy and enjoyment of good alcohol, good food, good sex, and good travel. Brett follows the prototype of Lady Duff Twysden as she

drank as much as anyone—it was the thing to do—but no one ever saw her make a fool of herself. Her attraction for men seemed less a matter of her own sensuality than her ability to fulfill their fantasies about themselves. She may even have been frigid, but her talent for satisfying her partners was considerable. . . . This habit of drifting with the tide, putting up with abusive treatment as though she deserved it, caring nothing for money except as a convenience for satisfying her temporary needs, were the traits Duff shared with the floaters who formed her clique. (Kert 158)

Hemingway's significant women were too self-assured and confident in themselves as individuals to put up with abusive treatment as though they deserved it. The difference between Duff and Hemingway's significant women is the bold way in which she interacts openly with a man and then moves on to the next conquest compared to the significant women's deeper more meaningful associations. Brett is described in much the same fashion as Grace Hemingway's family saw their matriarch—one who “could not be overlooked when she entered the room. She was the buoyant, creative one” (Kert 37).

Agnes, in her own way, also attempted to appear alluring in her nursing uniform rather than like a scullery maid. Reflecting Brett's manner of dress where she exhibits her "curves like the hull of a racing yacht" (Hemingway, *Sun Also Rises* 29), Agnes tightened and shortened her ill-fitting regulation uniforms in a more comely fashion. In a suggestive manner, Brett left men such as Pedro Romero and Robert Cohn behind with their illusions of ownership just as Agnes did. Agnes left behind a doctor who believed he and Agnes were engaged before she left the States and in the same manner, Hemingway returned to the States believing his own marriage to her was eminent. Too independent to think of herself as anyone's possession, Agnes, as Brett, believed in a life fashioned in opposition to what society dictated for women.

But Hadley's contribution to Hemingway's female protagonist creates the softer side of Brett. It is Brett's ability to fulfill the gentlemen's fantasies about themselves that is so reminiscent of Hadley's desire to assist Hemingway in becoming what and who he was—a man of the world and international celebrity. A Duff-like Brett only fulfills men's sexual fantasies while Hadley's softer and more caring abilities made a greater impact in the characterization of Brett, who can sadly but respectfully turn aside an impressionable young matador. Just as Hadley, Agnes, and Grace are central to Hemingway's life, Brett, as the collective image of Hemingway's three significant women, is the very core of Jake's life. The only trait Lady Duff shares collectively with the three women is the way in which Brett follows her own well-defined principles to a questionable future.

Brett is introduced as one of the first modern women to respond to the on-going reformation of the gender. As such, she rebels against traditional gender role

expectations. With a suggestion of loneliness and wishful thoughts of a relationship with Jake, she struggles with the conflicting hope for change against the physical limitations of her love. The struggling but determined modern woman evolves next into an independent and courageous woman viewed in *A Farewell to Arms* through Catherine Barkley who, different from Brett Ashley, actively searches for direction in an unstable world while retaining her individuality.

## Chapter II

“There isn’t any me any more. I’m you”:

Catherine Barkley in *A Farewell to Arms*

According to Robert Lewis, the major female character in *A Farewell to Arms*, Catherine Barkley, is “a mere passive sexual object, without thoughts and feelings of her own” (69), and Otto Friedrich says, “The nothingness of Catherine Barkley was finally expressed in her announcement that ‘there isn’t any me. I’m you’” (Whitlow 22). But this statement can be construed as a deliberate act on Catherine’s part. Catherine’s code is to remain with Frederic Henry, to be one with him in his wishes, and to serve him, a behavior which ultimately brings about her own fulfillment. Completely honest and aware of her own needs, she reveals her selflessness. The selflessness of her love for the young soldier, Frederic Henry, becomes the ultimate goal of her own unachieved love for her dead fiancé. She follows Frederic Henry regardless of the instability of life around her in doing so. Extending the image of a determined young girl begun with Brett Ashley, Catherine establishes direction and focus for women of the new era.

Catherine is first introduced as a woman devastated by her fiancé’s death. Looking back on her engagement, she regrets not giving him before he died her one ultimate gift—herself: “I wanted to do something for him. You see I didn’t care about the other thing and he could have had it. He could have had anything he wanted if I would have known. I would have married him or anything. I know all about it now. But then he wanted to go to war and I didn’t know. . . . That’s the end of it” (19). Catherine’s hope for the fulfillment of love has been shattered, and she clings to life precariously at

the beginning of the novel. Sounding as if she is about to “crack,” she comments about life and the war, “We’ll crack. We’ll crack in France. They [the soldiers] can’t go on doing things like the Somme and not crack. . . . Anybody may crack” (20). Discovering some direction in her life, however, unlike Brett Ashley, Catherine turns to nursing and the eventual nurturing of Frederic Henry to fill the void left by the death of her young fiancé. As she makes it her goal to fill the needs of others, Catherine understands what she must do to restore her own equilibrium. Unlike most women brought up in the nineteenth century, Catherine travels beyond the protective environment of her home as a nurse and takes a hard view of the war. As the soldiers talk about going to the front and being promoted just “for the merit of war” (124), the dangers involved in being on the front do not seem to matter to them. Catherine finds the conversation pointless. She simply states, “I only want you to have enough rank so that we’re admitted to the better restaurants” (125). She acknowledges what is going on through her actions and reactions signifying just how silly war and its trappings are to her.

Catherine maintains her courage and emotional control in the most trying and dangerous circumstances. These stereotypical masculine qualities enable her to become active in the world in the same fashion as her male counterpart, Frederic Henry. Suffering the loss of a loved one and the guilt of refusing a closer relationship before he died, she turns to Frederic Henry. Accepting his comfort, she says, “You will be good to me, won’t you? . . . You will, won’t you? Because we’re going to have a strange life” (27). Despite the critical misinterpretations of her character as lacking substance, Catherine amply demonstrates her moral character by re-building a new life out of the unpleasantness of her past, thereby experiencing life and love in a strange land. In a time

of change, her own psychological survival requires Catherine to interact and react in a stereotypically masculine manner of courage and control. If Catherine were utterly passive, she would have complied with Frederic Henry's wish to protect her through marriage; instead, she sets herself in opposition. She states after becoming pregnant, "You're not worried, are you. Please please don't. You mustn't worry" (138), only to reason later with Frederic Henry concerning marriage, "Don't be too technical, darling. I'll marry you as soon as I'm thin again" (294).

She has a woman's perception, intuition, and shrewd sensibility to react to a tentative Frederic Henry, who does not know where he really wants to be and who ends up fighting in a war that is not even his own. The ceaseless efforts she goes to in order to please Frederic Henry are evident when she "did not look happy" (152) and still accepts without complaining the brothel-like decor of their hotel room. To please Frederic Henry, Catherine sarcastically comments, "Vice is a wonderful thing. The people who go in for it seem to have good taste about it. The red plush is really fine. It's just the thing. And the mirrors are very attractive (153). Catherine reflects Hemingway's heroic code with insight and courage by exhibiting how one does not draw attention to oneself. Her personal strength and self-confidence in quietly accepting her pregnancy and thinking his well-being serve to support and encourage Frederic Henry's own growth and development from his state of naiveté. She challenges the status quo by developing and fulfilling her own needs and desires into a new personality and the new determined woman of that era. She consistently asserts that Frederic Henry not worry; she will always provide for him, and she thereby creates a more defined woman for the new



century who recognizes her own values as superior to social attitudes regarding women's roles.

Catherine meets her own needs as a woman in control and as Hemingway's ideal woman. By meeting the standards about which he fantasized, strong, active, and independent, she serves as a sexual companion with exclusive and complete attention to her lover's needs. Using the power of love, Catherine remains in control, asking nothing of her lover. Being intense and assertive like Brett Ashley, Catherine gains worldly experience in order not only to survive but also to find her own happiness. Brett brazenly observes each man as a new sexual conquest as seen in her comments about Pedro Romero: "My God! he's a lovely boy, . . . And how I would love to see him get into those clothes" (181). Catherine, in the meantime, presents herself in a traditionally Victorian manner that adds to a more sophisticated and refined image. When Rinaldi takes Frederic Henry to see her, saying, "You will please come and make me a good impression on her" (17), Catherine politely responds and asks, "How do you do? . . . You're not an Italian, are you?" (18). As a thoughtful and responsible woman, Catherine is a more mature individual than Brett Ashley. Being one of Hemingway's first determined women, Brett is blatantly rebellious while Catherine furthers the development by quietly rejecting society's traditional conventions. Catherine now seeks only an outlet for her giving nature. Even when Frederic Henry asks, "Let's get married now," she says in all her collective wisdom, "No, It's too embarrassing now. I show too plainly. I won't go before any one and be married in this state" (293). Repeatedly, he has asked her to marry since she is pregnant, but she realizes it is not important to her at the moment. With the same alluring beauty but with a more meaningful attitude for life than Brett,

Catherine evolves into a more complete picture of the new woman for the twentieth century.

While Brett introduces the gender struggle in a changing culture, Catherine projects the typical male emotional and moral toughness necessary for survival in a competitive world. Unlike the earlier fully-skirted, restrained Victorian women of his upbringing, Hemingway's fictional women embody the stereotypical flapper's physical freedom and sexuality with the more traditional domestic femininity. They would happily combine the pleasures of life and the satisfaction of a career. In literally giving herself to the one she loves, as Brett Ashley can only attempt to do, Catherine successfully becomes a teacher in the art of giving without the traditional commitment or expectations of an earlier era.

While Brett represents the beautiful young female archetype of the new era who rebels against traditional restraint, Catherine Barkley, as Hemingway's first character to progressively propel women towards maturity and a sense of self, moves away from the youthful obsession of drinking and insatiable sexual appetites. Brett moves from one empty relationship after another while Catherine transposes the identity of her dead fiancé to Frederic Henry to overcome the loss of love. Catherine shares with Brett the loss of her true love early in the war, but she is able to move away from Brett's likeness, leaving behind the image of a lost and confused young girl. Catherine involves herself equally in a relationship. She shows that sex is an expression of love rather than a proof. She sets herself apart from Brett Ashley by becoming a helpmate in the psychological growth of her lover. More experienced than Brett by being directly in a war, Catherine grows stronger rather than becoming demoralized by her experiences. She not only is sexually

liberated but is also more financially independent. Similar to, but more than, Hemingway's first heroine, Catherine is faithful; she is also a good sport and friend who possesses both the traditional domestic and maternal qualities. Looking at life realistically through her own experiences, though, Catherine recognizes as well as understands the limitations of life that Brett cannot see or is not willing to acknowledge. Even though she is pregnant when Frederic Henry deserts the army, she sensibly notes, "It's not deserting from the army. It's only the Italian army," and continues later, "You're such a silly boy, but I'll look after you" (251). Catherine finds a sense of self-worth in the love and devotion she extends to Frederic Henry whereas Brett's own attempts remain limited and continue to be unsuccessful. In an intensely feminine manner, Catherine is self-reliant and competent as she assists her lover with his own personal dreams by aiding in his escape from the horrors of war.

Catherine retains a strong bearing and dominating nature in her relationship with the father of her child. Much like Hemingway's own mother, Catherine's nurturing skills lead to her dedication, honesty, loyalty, and devotion that defy convention while demonstrating her self-sufficiency and determination. Just as Grace Hemingway escaped from the attitudes of Victorian restraint and order with her ambitious nature, Catherine has left the protective environment of her home to follow a successful career in another country; thus she exhibits the new woman's defiance towards patriarchal authority found in the confines of home. Catherine, moreover, shows Grace-like stamina by staying focused on her own endeavors as society found itself becoming discontented with the many changes occurring. With courage and a modern air of determination rather than rebellion, Catherine reflects Grace's own relationship with the men in her life as she

guides and powerfully projects her own will power and psychological strength. As Catherine courageously says good-bye to Frederic Henry, she declares: "Don't worry, darling. I'm not a bit afraid. It's just a dirty trick" (331), thus becoming, in Grace-like fashion, the strong "emotional banker, domineering spouse, and best girl" to Frederic Henry (Comley and Scholes 31).

Hemingway also turned to Agnes von Kurowsky as a major contributor to Catherine's characterization. Agnes's own nursing abilities during the war are echoed within the pages of *A Farewell to Arms*. Catherine reflects a preference for taking the night duty as Agnes did during her nursing career. Just as Agnes admitted that "she did not mind night duty" (42), "Catherine Barkley was greatly liked by the nurses because she would do night duty indefinitely" (Villard and Nagel 108). Catherine leaves the constraints of home to venture out in the world as a nurse just as Agnes left in the pursuit of adventure as a wartime nurse. Similar to Agnes, Catherine supports and encourages a young, naïve soldier in the hospital. Catherine's constant reassurance and concern for the special man in her life is the most significant attribute drawn from Agnes. Hemingway mirrors the very setting of the war in the confinement he experienced in the hospital with his nurse and first love interest, Agnes von Kurowsky. The memory of Agnes nursing a wounded Hemingway is reflected in the story of Catherine and Frederic Henry's relationship in the newly built hospital as seen through the porter's comment, "You are the first patient" (82) and Hemingway's reflection that it "did not smell like a hospital" (83-84). And again, subtly reminiscent of Agnes when she refuses to marry Hemingway, Catherine also retains her strength by not being utterly passive and complying with a soldier's wishes to marry by remaining in control of her own actions and decisions.

While Agnes retained control over all aspects of her life, Catherine does surrender to her desire for love, but she continues to control and manipulate young Frederic Henry. Agnes wrote in her diary, "I came over here for work and until the war is over I won't be able to do anything foolish, which is lucky for me. I used to pride myself on my sense. I wonder if I'm getting foolish or if I can blame the romantic country for its effect on me" (Villard and Nagel 73). The picture that emerges is that of a war-torn country filled with idealistic men and women in a quest for adventure, and interested in people and in the world around them. Catherine, like Agnes, experiences love, adventure and death while enjoying the fantasies of love in a foreign land.

Still another woman from Hemingway's past merges with the motherly but desirable nurse. Catherine's saintliness can be generally attributed to Hemingway's perception of his first wife, Hadley. Henry Villard and James Nagel believe, "In no other work did Hemingway describe his heroine in terms of such passionate tenderness; so many of his women appear tough or cynical in comparison" (44). Catherine's ability to build upon Frederic Henry's ego is constructed from Hadley's own decisive confidence within her relationship with Hemingway. An echo of Hemingway's Hadley is heard through Frederic Henry's encouragement: "You're all right, Cat" (330). Catherine's nickname is derived from Hemingway's name for Hadley—"Feather Cat, shortened to Kat or Cat" (Kert 218). Even Hadley's own promise to Hemingway—"whatever he needed her to do, she did. . . . Ernest was her future and her religion. What he wanted, she wanted" (Reynolds, *Paris Years* 254)--can be heard behind Catherine's words when she consistently reminds Frederic Henry that she will always provide for him. Like Hadley, Catherine lives through Frederic Henry and uses him as a guide for their life

together as a couple based on love and trust. With a talent for listening, Catherine epitomizes Hadley's intuitiveness in sensing the needs of the one she loves as well as in reflecting Hadley's devotion and trust. Catherine quietly remains beguiling in her devotion to Frederic Henry as she manages his life by surrounding him with her own stability and tranquillity in war-torn Europe. Remaining strong, patient, and loving throughout her own personal problems, Catherine continues, as Hadley, to act as his soul mate by supporting her man's emotional and physical needs.

Even though Catherine dies giving birth to their child, she gains love as her final triumphant gift to herself. Love brings happiness to Catherine just as her death brings to her lover an awareness of his own life. Catherine's desire to serve Frederic Henry awakens his own desires. Just as Catherine continuously reflects the values of life, Frederic Henry now knows what to value most—"Some one I love" (262). That desire to serve is Catherine's code of selfless love that is of central importance to the hero's continuing existence—the one legacy he will carry through life after her death. Catherine claims Henry as her own to care for by saying, "I don't want any one else to touch you. I'm silly. I get furious if they touch you. . . . Especially Ferguson and Gate and the other, what's her name?" (103). Catherine as the new woman is physically strong, active, self-assured, and self-reliant, while the Victorian culture portrayed women's only access to the good life as dependent upon their ability to attract, lure, marry, and keep a husband who would provide for them. Catherine proves her dedication to Henry by suggesting, "I'll do what you want and say what you want and then I'll be a great success, won't I?" (105).

This alluring, self-reliant new woman illustrates a more mature Brett who takes charge of her life and remains independent while psychologically supporting her soul

mate. As another step in the progression of Hemingway's modern women, Catherine evolves into another type of the Hemingway heroine in *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, a woman who can face the devastation of war and death to exhibit her own unique quality of grace under pressure. That strength to survive with a caring attitude softens the former flapper image that moves from Brett Ashley to Catherine Barkley, who finds direction in life through an equal and loving relationship. The new woman's image now enlarges into the more purposeful figures not only of Maria and Pilar in *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, but also Renata in *Across the River and Into the Trees*, women who restore men within a relationship without losing their own independence or identity.

## Chapter III

“You are brave. You are loyal. You have decision. You have intuition. Much decision and much heart”: Maria and Pilar in *For Whom the Bell Tolls*

Critics of *For Whom The Bell Tolls* have viewed Maria as being “without individual personality” (Whitlow 33) and Pilar, with her strong qualities and looks, as more masculine than feminine. Lionel Trilling, failing to recognize Pilar and Maria’s experiences and strength, perceives that “the men are all dominance and knowledge, the women all essential innocence and responsive passion” (81). Philip Young declares, “Maria is just too ethereal for the world she is in—is submissive and devoted beyond credibility and to the extinction of her own character” (109). Unwilling to acknowledge what Maria has gone through and grown from, Young fails to note her brush with death, physical as well as psychological, as proof of Maria’s way of reaching a Hemingway-like grace under pressure which is as important to the heroine as it is to the hero.

If Catherine Barkley epitomizes the maternal woman protecting her hero and defying Victorian convention, Maria exemplifies a woman who understands the reciprocal benefits of love and the psychological and spiritual good derived from physical bonding. Pilar is a masculine version of womanhood whose confidence and superiority build and ensure cooperation within the group of fighters. Not only does Maria awaken in Jordan a more balanced and tolerant view of life, but her own zest for living is also restored. Under the influence of a mutual love, Maria becomes more self- and love-motivated, gently guided by Pilar’s strength and her mystical ways. The women’s contributions to the cause are recognized by the soldiers, who, for example, say to Pilar,



"You are brave. You are loyal. You have decision. You have intuition. Much decision and much heart" (94).

As the cruelties to Maria and Pilar are revisited and remembered by the women and their fellow fighters, their quiet courage and loyalty are uniquely highlighted. As one soldier notes, Maria is "not as we are" (291) and Pilar is "brave. . . . A hundred times braver than Pablo [her husband]. But something barbarous" (26). Maria and Pilar are war victims, just as Brett and Catherine are, but Maria lacks their confidence and worldliness. It is misleading, however, for critics to call Maria "mindless," "passive," or "pathetically submissive" as a heroine. She is an individual who returns to her natural role in the relationship between the sexes in order to assert her own worth. With the quiet reassurances of Jordan and Pilar's gentle guidance regarding women's ways, Maria can put the devastating treatment by the Fascists behind her so she can trust mankind once again and eventually feel "the earth move" (160) in loving ecstasy with Jordan.

Maria finds a sense of balance in life. As an innocent girl, she is shaved and raped viciously, which she overcomes through the same strength and courage that men show in battle by working beside them. Maria's quiet presence symbolizes her single-minded courage and purpose as she refuses to see herself as a victim imprisoned forever by society's definition of a victim. For her own survival in a world out of control, she must gain experience in its ways as quickly as possible. Maria finds the courage even after being terrorized to "love at first sight" (73) in order to share her strength, courage, and self with Jordan. Even though she has been terribly treated, she nevertheless remains psychologically unspoiled, an innocence best revealed when she comes to Jordan with her lack of knowledge in something as simple as how to kiss. Maria acknowledges her

limitations: "I cannot kiss. I do not know how" (70). Her journey into a changing world offers her the opportunity to develop qualities of courage, skill, and independence as well as supporting and sustaining emotional control in the most trying and dangerous circumstances of fighting beside other men and women. With compassion and intuition, Maria, like Jordan, shares the journey in attaining heroism through wisdom and commitment to a cause. She follows the guerrilla fighters in war and leaves Jordan.

Maria's trust in men even after her cruel treatment goes unrealized by the critics even with the subtle but revealing dialogue between Maria and Jordan. Maria has knowledge of the cruelties of life, but in her innocence she has not yet comprehended what is happening. Another soldier relates to Jordan, "This one [Maria], truly, has suffered much. She is not as we are" (291). Maria has bravely survived and remains committed to life after her parents are killed by a Falangist firing squad and she is raped. In addition to her devastating rape and shearing, she also gains the intuition and insight to know that on the battlefield there is nothing certain during wartime as time runs short in the matter of healing, companionship, and love. While time is of grave importance throughout the novel, love and trust enable Maria to transcend time in such a way to overcome the limitations of war to live life to the fullest once again.

Maria willingly assumes ordinary chores in order to exhibit her care and love of Jordan. Women's traditional responsibilities for nurturing are given more attention on the battlefield. Not imprisoned by stereotypical values, Maria willingly commits herself to Jordan and the cause to fight in order to protect a man of her own choosing as companion and lover. She asks, "If thou would show me I would clean and oil thy pistol. . . . If you will teach me to shoot it either one of us could shoot the other and himself, or

herself, if one were wounded and it were necessary to avoid capture” (170). She then suggests, “when thou art wounded I will care for thee and dress thy wound and wash thee and feed thee—. . . Then when you are sick I will care for thee and make thee soups and clean thee and do all for thee” (171).

In her commitment to love, Maria finds meaning in life. She has the insight and strength to communicate her love and trust to Jordan, who is a stranger to her country. In giving herself willingly and tenderly, Maria lends herself to the band of fighters as they battle tyranny. Jordan mentally notes, “So she made things easier. . . . So if you love this girl as much as you say you do, you had better love her very hard and make up in intensity what the relation will lack in duration and in continuity. . . . Two nights to love, honor and cherish. For better and for worse. In sickness and in death. No that wasn’t it. In sickness and in health. Till death do us part. In two nights (168). This is their brief marriage—a merging of two hearts as Jordan accepts and understands what Maria brings to the fight as well as to him as a man. As Pilar points out, “Before we had religion and other nonsense. Now for every one there should be some one to whom one can speak frankly, for all the valor that one could have one becomes very alone” (89). With the possibility of death as they continue their fight for freedom and with time restricting their love, Jordan and Maria achieve a spiritual love that transcends their physical union. Their love is described by Rollo May as “an accelerating experience of touch, contact, union to the point where the moment the awareness of separateness is lost” (316). Maria and Jordan are both carried beyond their personal isolation into a complete union of two people.

The intensity and idyllic nature of her gift are so overwhelming and quietly sacrificed that many critics and scholars tend to overlook her actions. Maria and Robert Jordan find similarities in the life and death of their parents, political beliefs, and respectful hopes and desires. Maria acknowledges, "Then you and me we are the same," and Pilar notices, "You could be brother and sister by the look" (67). Robert Jordan's reputation is raised, and through his interactions with Maria his manhood is reaffirmed with the other fighters. Hemingway gives the heroine the power to change her life through her own qualities of personal character, integrity, and practicality. In giving herself to Jordan, she gives peace and meaning in life not only to him but for her own salvation. Her actions say more than words: "Robert Jordan looked at Maria and shook his head. She sat down by him and put her arm around his shoulder. Each knew how the other felt and they sat there and Robert Jordan ate the stew, taking time to appreciate the mushrooms completely, and he drank the wine and they said nothing" (324). Maria insures that Robert Jordan will live his life fully within the three days during which the action occurs. Hemingway again introduces an environment of love and giving in *For Whom the Bell Tolls* just as he did in *A Farewell to Arms*, making death easier to accept.

Maria, like Catherine in *A Farewell to Arms*, finds her own way of handling a problem and discovers how to restore her faith in life. While Catherine offers a more determined and directed individual than Brett, who first introduced the struggling new woman, Maria further adds to the modern woman's appearance of determination. More adept than Catherine in the ways of war, Maria still remains innocently naïve and charming. With her soft and appealing ways, Maria exhibits the modern woman's courage and perception as well as her psychological strength in a changing world. Just as

Catherine sets up the image of the heroine as a helpmate and shows sex as an expression of love, the new woman now shares more with the hero. She is similar to Catherine in her faithfulness, but Maria also adds to the modern woman's image; she epitomizes self-reliance and competency as she moves forward in the face of death as the war continues. In an intensely independent manner, Maria can confidently leave Jordan as he follows his last mission that leads to his death. She moves through life responsibly with courage, faith, and the stamina to continue fighting for what she believes in as she follows Pilar and the band of guerrilla fighters. She attempts to exorcise the horrible memories of war, but like Hemingway's hero, Maria contributes to the cause without drawing attention to herself. She serves the physical and emotional needs of Jordan, but she also fills her own needs along the way just as Catherine Barkley does. Similar to Catherine Barkley too, Maria completes the growth and development in her health and well-being through the act of giving in a loving relationship. She lives on proving her self-worth by fighting for freedom.

Just as Catherine Barkley in *A Farewell to Arms* originates in Hemingway's past, so too are Maria and her adventures biographically derived in *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. Philip Young asserts that Hemingway again "was to insert his own contemporaneous love interest—presumably his third wife, to whom the novel was dedicated, and whom in appearance Maria somewhat resembled" (108). At the onset of publication, readers recognized the likeness of Martha Gelhorn, Hemingway's third wife:

Her teeth were white in her brown face and her skin and her eyes were the same golden tawny brown. She had high cheekbones, merry eyes and a straight mouth with full lips. Her hair was the golden brown of a grain

field that has been burned dark in the sun and it was cut short all over her head so that it was but little longer than the fur on a beaver pelt. (22)

Not only were the physical aspects from Martha attributed to Maria, but unpublished fragments in the Kennedy Library “suggest quite strongly that ‘rabbit’ was a nickname” for Martha Gellhorn used by Hemingway” (Staunton 79). Remarkably, these details all became intricate parts of *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. Over and over again, Hemingway combines the attributes of women he admired to establish his young heroine.

But the docile Maria does not bear the remotest psychological resemblance to Martha. Depicted in Hadley-like manner, Maria first puts her man ahead of anything and anyone else. In following Hemingway’s idealized version of Hadley, Maria is docile, which leads to her own fulfillment of trust and love. With her capacity to endure without complaint the physical discomforts of following her soul mate through the countryside, Maria is another Hadley. She neither nags nor upsets him in any manner. But in Grace-like manner, Maria also upholds a code of physical courage and endurance with a freedom found in the backwoods. Unique to Grace was her habit of retreating to her own cottage atop Red Mountain for quiet contemplation in an era when women generally made family life their exclusive domain. Maria willingly retreats with Jordan to assist him with the guns just as Grace Hemingway took up her husband’s hobby of shooting. Maria, in similar fashion, finds solace, strength, and courage in the backwoods of the countryside to bravely commit to the war raging around her. Moreover, reminiscent of a caring nurse in a war-torn countryside, Agnes von Kurowsky is seen in Maria as the beautiful, strong and desirable companion. Maria fulfills Jordan’s every need just as Agnes fed Hemingway’s psychological needs. But after giving her undivided care and

attention, Maria, like Agnes, must walk away as dictated by circumstances. In her intuitive wisdom, Maria recognizes the need to go on and follow Jordan's instructions to "do your duty now" (463).

These concretely different characteristics enable Maria to function with men in a man's war, which demonstrates her true personality, living exclusively for her man while remaining separate with her own identity. She merges with her love, thus fading into the future, saying, "There isn't any me. I am only with him. Take care of him for me and that will be me" (450). Maria further develops the concept of the new determined woman of the world. She can move on in life with her own capacity for living. Maria successfully handles the new challenges in a world of tremendous change as few women before her through her experiences and knowledge of war and its psychological affects. As Debra Modellmog contends, "Maria is a perfect blend of gentleness and masculine firmness and the sense of hardness of life" (31) as she accepts her past and follows the war confidently and courageously. While Hemingway exclusively follows Jordan's thoughts and actions, Maria becomes the final impetus for Jordan to confront death.

By leaving her home to fight in the war, Maria quietly breaks through the limitations of a patriarchal system that had stifled women's freedom in the past. With this breakthrough, there exists hope for a promising future for women as individuals in the twentieth century. Maria gains confidence with her collective experiences of war and men. In standing side-by-side with Jordan, she shares the destructive qualities of war and death under what can only be derived as "grace under pressure." Just as importantly, however, Pilar in her masculine image shows a maturing Maria how to face war's destruction.

Within the time constraints of the war, Maria in her quiet and restive manner draws the men together. So, too, does Pilar as the older and wiser wife of one of the fighters. Providing an air of respectability, Pilar encourages all those around her. She keeps alive the purpose and reason for the guerrillas' allegiance to the Republic. But the wise old woman also overwhelms the men with her mystical ways. Even Jordan is mystified by her ability: "I don't think she was faking about the hand. She wouldn't tell me what she saw, of course. Whatever she saw she believed in herself" (176). Whether it is her mystical powers or a woman's intuition, Pilar understands the power of love. In contrast to the child-like Maria, Pilar appears with her age, maturity, confidence, leadership ability, and maternal appearance "like a mountain" (136). She is the guiding hand for a maturing young woman and the fighting militia.

This grandiose appearance of Pilar is drawn from an older version of Hemingway's mother. With her massive physical presence and the emotional support she renders to the men, Pilar resembles Grace Hemingway with her mothering and over-protective nature towards Maria. Even the term "the woman" with regard to Pilar significantly alludes to her leadership power and independence so reminiscent of Grace Hemingway. To those who knew her as well as to those who first met her, "Grace at sixty-three was still queenly, and in public appeared to be indomitable" (Kert 323). But just as effectively as Grace, Pilar also resembles Hadley in the way she manages the lives of others so as to give them the freedom necessary to move about confidently in an emotionally charged environment. Hadley was described as "the best guy on a trip you ever saw" (Kert 153). More than a wife, Hadley was a companion and help-mate in the same manner that Pilar confidently works with and fights beside the band of fighters,



sharing their experiences of triumph and pain. Jordan thoughtfully notes, “[W]hile I trust the woman absolutely, I could not tell how she would react to such a drastic thing. . . .

Without the woman there is no organization nor any discipline here and with the woman it can be very good. . . . Only he and the woman really believe in the Republic as far as I can see; but it is too early to know that yet” (63). “The woman” pursues her own unconventional actions towards independence but with the assurance and approval of her “family,” whether it is within the home or fighting for one’s convictions. And after her skills are no longer required, Pilar leaves Jordan to finish his assignment just as Agnes dismissed Hemingway so she could go on with her work. With Maria’s quiet durability and “the woman’s” strong charismatic influence with the men, Maria and Pilar use their unique skills and qualities to enable Jordan to take charge of the small band of fighters.

While Maria is constantly tested as she confronts danger, she follows the heroine code of behavior introduced through Brett and established by Catherine. So, too, does Pilar. Neither Pilar nor Maria is a “man of action,” however, as they both quietly fade into the background to follow their own agenda of creating a world of peace within the devastation and destruction of battle. Their ability to fade into the background anticipates the young, idyllic Renata in *Across the River and Into the Trees*, who again uses an allotted time to sustain a dying soldier’s honor and self-respect before she, too, respectfully disappears into oblivion, leaving her soldier behind.

## Chapter IV

“Out-maneuver you the best day you were ever born and she would stay and fight”:

Renata in *Across the River and Into the Trees*

Just as with *The Sun Also Rises*, *A Farewell to Arms*, and *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, critics have focused little attention on the female character in *Across the River and Into the Trees*. Hemingway once again bestows his female protagonist with feminine qualities, such as her nurturing and maternal instincts, and combines them with certain code-like mannerisms established in his male protagonists to create a bold, courageous, and honorable woman who is also heroic.

Hemingway hoped that *Across the River and Into the Trees* would be better than *A Farewell to Arms* “since it didn’t have the youth and the ignorance” (Lynn 550). American reviewers, however, found the novel “disappointing, embarrassing, distressing, trivial, tawdry, garrulous and tired” (Baker 486). Robert Shaw, for example, believes that “The portrait of Renata is perhaps the weakest element. She does not come through as a realized figure” (110). Yet as with later critics, Shaw neither realizes her significant role in aiding the male protagonist in his development nor takes into account her past, specifically, the death of her father in a war-torn country, which explains her sensitivity to armed conflict. But regardless of the critical reviews, Hemingway’s public showed great faith in his newest novel. *Across the River and Into the Trees* continued to climb as a bestseller “while the fan mail indicated that many of his admirers had been deeply moved by the story” (Baker 487). The public accepted the view of Hemingway’s fictional women as strongly dedicated and powerful in their own rights. The newest young heroine

follows her heart in sustaining an older soldier in his quest for peace and honor, although it presents a different twist. *Across the River and Into the Trees* continues the theme of love and the healing effects of a woman on an emotionally and physically wounded man that was first seen in *The Sun Also Rises*. However, unlike that earlier novel, *Across the River and Into the Trees* exhibits a mature young woman who has dealt with her past and who can therefore help an emotionally crippled soldier. Where Hemingway began with exhibiting a young soldier in turmoil in *The Sun Also Rises*, he later shows an older soldier who admits “he was confessing” (Hemingway 204) in *Across the River and Into the Trees*. The older soldier finally comes to terms with his past mistakes in life but only through the support and love of an emotionally mature woman.

Renata, the young heroine, comes from a generation of wealthy, renowned Italians whose reputation is above moral approach. She exudes confidence as she strides into the bar to meet the retired Colonel Richard Cantwell. The moment she appears at the door, men notice and want to meet her by extending an invitation: “Ask her to have a drink with us here before you carry her off to that corner table. Isn’t she a lovely girl?” (78). Cantwell’s attentive comment to Renata, “You’re also very beautiful and lovely and I love you,” causes her to blush and innocently respond, “You always say that and I don’t know what it means but I like to hear it” (80). Her youthful innocence is apparent with her lack of knowledge concerning love. At nineteen, Renata’s youthful bloom is enticing to the fifty-four-year-old colonel. Her bold but fresh actions stand out with the descriptive reactions of Cantwell to her every move: “She turned her head and raised her chin, without vanity, nor coquetry, and the Colonel felt his heart turn over inside him, as though some sleeping animal had rolled over in its burrow and frightened, deliciously, the

other animal sleeping close beside" (81). Their familiar relationship is apparent as she addresses him by his first name, Richard. Their age difference, however, becomes a significant factor in their relationship. She respects his experience while he appreciates and admires her trusting naiveté and beauty as well as her confidence and maturity. It is a strange mixture for one so young. With the inherent intuitiveness of a woman, Renata encourages Cantwell to bare his soul. Their conversations exhibit her intelligence as she begins speaking Spanish, only to switch to French, then English. While Renata's actions exhibit her youthful exuberance, the Colonel's continuous thoughts give reign to the differences in their lifestyles, ages, and beliefs.

Cantwell's thinking centers on life's beginnings and endings: "I have lost three battalions in my life and three women and now I have a fourth, and loveliest, and where the hell does it end?" (91). His dreams and illusions bring hope and happiness to his final days as he wistfully comments, "I wish we could be married and have five sons" (95). But realistically, he understands he only has a short time, particularly when he feels "a little dizzy from the medicine . . .", and admits, "That's the way it always is" (89). With his heart trouble, he lives each day to the fullest. The reader is reminded periodically about Cantwell's heart trouble through his simple thoughts and comments: "the twinge came" and Cantwell says, "the hell with that" (101). He comes to appreciate the time he has with Renata and attentively listens to her mature advice with respect. Her strength and maturity are apparent with her demands: "Don't lie to me please, darling, when we have so little time. . . . Don't you know I want you to die with the grace of a happy death" (219-220). Their relationship brings contentment to the couple and fulfills their individual needs as well. Renata reflects upon their association quite simply: "What you

do to give pleasure to another whom you love is most honorable” (100). Respect and love are constant between them.

Reminiscent of Catherine Barkley’s love affair in *A Farewell to Arms* and Maria’s short-lived romance in *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, Renata’s relationship with Cantwell shows the growing trend of women’s freedom being equal to that of men, an equality only glimpsed sporadically in earlier novels. She illustrates her gentle strength in a positive, non-subservient manner. Renata glorifies in her feminine power, holds a prominent social position, and unashamedly uses her skills of innate intelligence. Much in the same manner as Catherine and Maria interact with their soldiers, Renata encourages Hemingway’s latest hero to lighten the heavy burden of guilt from his conscience through her own mission of love and selfless devotion. When his past threatens to overcome Cantwell emotionally, Renata suggests, “Wouldn’t you tell me about them [memories]? I would like to have a share in your sad trade” (91). As the novel progresses, she continues to encourage his revelations: “Please love me true and tell me as true as you can, without hurting yourself in any way” (206-207). Renata channels his bitterness and anxieties by quietly but firmly directing Cantwell’s thoughts and actions to create an atmosphere of peace.

Renata’s own memories and terrifying observations serve as creditable evidence of her courage and dignity. Hemingway’s male protagonist cannot relate to anyone who would not understand his pain. Cantwell thinks to himself, “He only loved people, he thought, who had fought or been mutilated. . . . you only felt true tenderness and love for those who had been there and had received the castigation that everyone receives who goes there long enough” (71). With her traumatic background from the war, Renata’s

sympathy and understanding are more convincing to and trusted by the hardened soldier. She remembers, "This is the place where the Germans shot the pigeons" (150). The loss and sorrow caused by the war create a link of understanding between Renata and Cantwell that leads to a special love.

Described by the dying soldier as "My last and only and true love" (91), Renata sustains their love and Cantwell's remaining days with her undivided attention. She manipulates him so that he overcomes his bitterness and regains a sense of dignity before facing death. Just as Maria and Jordan share a special love within their limited time together in *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, the love so briefly shared between Renata and Cantwell gives closure to many painful memories of wartime suffering. The couple pinpoint their love for each other with Renata asking, "Don't you feel better to be loved?", and Cantwell concluding:

Yes, I feel as though I were out on some bare-assed hill where it was too risky to dig, and the rocks all solid, but with nothing jutting, and no bulges, and all of a sudden instead of being there naked, I was armoured. Armoured and the eighty-eights not there. (122)

Cantwell has finished his assigned missions in life and now, through sharing his last days with a young woman, he can re-live his youth. Cantwell concludes to himself, "I'd rather not love anyone. I'd rather have fun and fun, his good side said to him, you have no fun when you do not love" (71-72). The love and pleasure he shares with Renata allow him the opportunity to find the peace he so desperately seeks and which eventually leads him to become the more fully developed hero.

With instinctive intuition and code of behavior seen earlier in Brett, Catherine, and Maria, Renata parallels Hemingway's other protagonists. They all sustain their companion's confidence. But Renata remains separate from the earlier heroines as she confidently acknowledges a pristine reputation: "Everything is known in Venice anyway. But it is also known who my family are and that I am a good girl. Also they know it is you and it is I. We have some credit to exhaust" (104). Renata willingly takes the time to psychologically support a man who feels the need to confess while she confidently remains unconcerned about her reputation. The time spent together without the fear of social reprisals allows her the chance to gently guide his memories. Renata, like Catherine, listens maturely and without criticism to the hero's mental wanderings through the battlefields of the past. She says, "When you love someone and he is your hero, you like to hear about the places and the things" (131). Renata has no ulterior motive other than her concern and love for a dying man. Her exclusive commitment to him is shown in their journeys through the many dinners and drinks shared in the last few days of Cantwell's life. Cantwell does not initially understand that true glory to a retired soldier means that "Every day is a new and fine illusion" (213). Only through her careful planning and manipulation of their conversations is Cantwell's final mission of peace successful. While Hemingway centers the story on his male protagonist, the female heroine is once again the final impetus for the hero in confronting death confidently and ceremoniously.

Renata willingly shares her heartfelt love in his therapeutic reminiscing while she fully understands the time constraints placed upon them due to his poor health. She respectfully requests, "Please talk, I'm taking care of you" (222). Renata is never cruel,

but she is always consistent in her pursuit of her hero's psychological well-being. In recognizing his goodness as well as overlooking and accepting the horror of his deformed hand, she facilitates his "re-birth." Cantwell complains, "It's so damned ugly and I dislike looking at it" and Renata replies, "You don't know about your hand" (94). To her the ugliest part of him exhibits the best part of his manhood—his experience and success are quietly displayed without complaining of the atrocities undergone. With Renata's concentrated efforts, Cantwell successfully sustains his virility through the confessional stories that cleanse his soul. She follows her own unique courage and insight; thus she establishes her own special code of behavior. Cantwell describes her by saying, "She'd out-manuever you the best day you were ever born and she would stay and fight" (161). In her own right, she demonstrates a strong character by satisfactorily guiding Hemingway's male protagonist's life in such a manner that her own dignified and selfless actions are easily overlooked.

More important than the repetitive war experiences, Renata and her hero's simple but descriptive dialogue and thoughts establish Renata's character in a positive and accurate fashion. Renata's words and thoughts exhibit a special sensitivity as she pleads with Cantwell:

"Don't lie to me please, darling, when we have so little time. . . .

Don't you see you need to tell me things to purge your bitterness? . . .

Don't you know I want you to die with the grace of a happy death? . . .

Tell me some more please and be just as bitter as you want." (219-220)

Her willingness to remain in this man's life signifies a special kind of loyalty. With overtones of Frederic Henry and Catherine's relationship, Cantwell asks, "What happens



to people that love each other?" and Renata replies, "I suppose they have whatever they have, and they are more fortunate than others. Then one of them gets the emptiness forever" (249). Renata, like Brett, Catherine, and Maria, becomes another one of the beautiful and idyllic women Hemingway admired. Just as each previous fictional heroine voices her own opinions, Renata confidently directs Cantwell in finding his peace and dignity. In Renata, the reader sees a glimmer of the brazen Brett with her forwardness, but she is softened by a Catherine-like maturity and a Maria-like purity, which gives the overall effect of an alluring but capable woman who has become the modern standard. Moving from one drink or dinner to another, the new woman to emerge is sophisticated and wise. She completes the image of the modern woman that began with Brett in *The Sun Also Rises*, but with the addition of understanding and compassion that enables young Renata to face life maturely independent after her lover's death. This final image of the woman for the twentieth century shows a female who recognizes her own self-worth and exerts her own ideals and beliefs.

But just as with all Hemingway's heroines, Renata is a collective image of his three significant women. She takes in Colonel Cantwell and his problems just as Grace Hemingway, "warm-hearted and hospitable, . . . took their [young people's] problems seriously and opened her house to them" (Kert 42). Just as a mother listens to a loved one's experiences, Renata possesses a mother's devoted attachment as she suggests, "Wouldn't you tell me about them? I would like to have a share in your sad trade" (91). Strongly self-possessed, Renata combines Grace's nurturing skills and self-sufficient attitude with her youthful guidance to reflect a conservative and moralistic model in a modern world. She demonstrates an indefinable air of breeding combined with a vision

of self-reliance and competency through her statement, "I have never cared what anyone thought, ever . . ." (94-95). Renata faces the difficulty of loving an older man who desperately needs her love and guidance. Facing the challenge of change, Renata, like Grace, accepts and boldly moves through life. She says, "I never cry" (88). From the influence of Grace, a strong and determined woman emerges as the modern Renata. But unlike Hemingway's mother, Renata has similar wartime memories as her hero.

In sharing the discomforts, both mental and physical, Renata's association with Cantwell resembles Agnes von Kurowsky's with Hemingway. Renata's love, reflective of Agnes' feelings, is more about emotional peace than the physical union between a man and a woman. By emulating the reassuring Agnes, Renata's warm presence and mature composure result in a companionship that becomes the more important aspect of their relationship. Renata, reminiscent of Agnes, cares for and respects her war hero. In an innocent but strangely independent fashion, Renata notes, "I can be your daughter as well as everything else" (94). Sensitive to Cantwell's every mood, Renata, so much like Agnes, can provide the care and devotion Hemingway found so desirable. As a fashionable young woman, she reflects a youthful Agnes as she refuses to be tied down. Renata responds to Cantwell's suggestion of marriage by revealing, "I thought it over, and I thought we should not" (90). Again similar to Agnes, Renata says, "Let's have fun" early in her relationship only to state again later, "We are having fun" (111). Strongly suggestive of Agnes, Renata feeds Cantwell's psychological needs before walking away as dictated by life's circumstances. She even comments, "We don't have too much luck do we?" (106). In her own intuitive wisdom, Renata recognizes the need to give her

psychological support as well as the physical aspects of love that the Colonel desperately needs before he dies.

But Renata is also reminiscent of Hadley with her perceptive behavior. Through her own style of psychoanalysis, Renata gives special attention and love to Cantwell, again much like Hadley. She listens attentively, just as Hadley did, to the desultory ramblings of a loved one that creates an environment exclusively centered on him. Hadley also adds to Renata's character by the very fact that she is economically independent as well as emotionally and psychologically confident. With an air of sophistication, Renata, so reminiscent of Hadley, can confidently discuss their emotional and physical needs. Renata states, "Don't you feel better to be loved?" (122). With all the confidence of an independently modern woman, Renata comfortably accompanies Cantwell through the last days of his life, listening and attentively noting to him: "You don't know how important things that are said are" (112). Remaining strongly supportive, patient, and loving, Renata reflects Hadley's generosity and support, which reaffirms the modern image of coping with life's changes. Neither coy nor prudish, Renata as Hadley remains a faithful supporter and constant companion by firmly counseling her soldier through his insecurities. As his emotional and financial equal, she is an asset to the emotional well-being of their relationship, just as Hadley remained faithful to Hemingway throughout his life. With Hadley's unselfish, loving care, Grace's mature power of persuasion, and Agnes' strong, practical-minded devotion in support of the hero's physical and psychological well-being, Renata is built into a desirable young character.

But the female protagonist is also modeled after a young friend who became another infatuation for Hemingway—Adriana Ivanrich. Bernice Kert has argued that Martha Gellhorn, Hemingway's third wife, "attributed Ernest's infatuation with Adriana to his romanticized memories of Italy from his youth and a need to act out the fictional love affair he created for Cantwell and Renata" (Kert 447). In the image of the young nineteen-year-old woman, Hemingway describes Renata in his novel much like Adriana as he first saw her: "youth and tall striding beauty, and the carelessness the wind had made of her hair. She had pale, almost olive colored skin, a profile that could break your, or any one else's heart, and her dark hair, of an alive texture, hung down over her shoulders" (Hemingway, *Across the River* 78-79). Renata, like Adriana, shows the supreme power that women retain with their beauty, temperament, and sensitivity. Through her understanding and dedication, she guarantees fulfillment and happiness in the latter days of Colonel Cantwell's life just as Adriana did for Hemingway. In evaluating her relationship with Hemingway, Adriana stated, ". . . there was something of the big child about him. At times I even felt the desire to protect him against him" (Kert 443).

The purpose remains the same as in all of Hemingway's novels for his female protagonists. Renata joins Brett, Catherine, and Maria in exhibiting idyllic beauty and character and joins Pilar in displaying the strength and determination of the modern woman. She also remains eternally feminine as well as in line characteristically with Hemingway's heroes—morally strong, practical-minded, and honorable. Renata shares in Cantwell's memories in order to dispel the chaos of his past by devoting herself in such a way to support and sustain his own final development. Hemingway sees to it that his

protagonist's final wish is fulfilled through Renata's efforts. Colonel Cantwell finds peace in Renata's arms as she says, "Please hold me very tightly so we can be a part of each other for a little while." The Colonel replies, "We can try, . . ." and Renata says, "I'm you now" (146). For one so young but so knowledgeable in the ways of life, Renata remains strong in her commitment with the man she calls "her hero" and her love.

To the critics, the hero remains in the forefront of Hemingway's work. However, while Renata, like Maria and Pilar in *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, fades away within the pages of the novel after extending exclusive care, devotion, and protection, she stands equal to the hero in confidence and determination.

## Epilogue

Earlier critics, such as Malcolm Cowley and Lionel Trilling, fail to establish how Hemingway presents women who provide significant psychological as well as physical support to assure not only their success but also that of their male counterpart. Later critics, however, such as Mimi Gladstein, actually do examine the woman's position. Yet Gladstein only gives minimal information about Hemingway's women, stating that "if she performs in a reinforcing way, she is a positive functionary. In this role she is pliant and submissive, sometimes helpful. She does not interfere with his quest and is often the tool through which he wins his merit badge for sexual potency" (50). This view, however, belies the image of these women as submissive or weak.

These women experience the vision and mission of the male protagonists in such a way that they also share the challenges and occasionally the dangers faced in life. In his novels, Hemingway creates women who rebel against traditional norms and expectations as they gain in equality and happiness. Through their efforts, they may appear to surrender a part of themselves, but they gain more in their psychological well-being and happiness. In the manner of the male protagonist, each woman devotes her strength, courage, tenderness, and love.

Critics only recently have looked into how the Hemingway heroine shares the male protagonist's belief in a common code of behavior. The female character exhibits quiet determination that is as strong as the makeup of her male counterpart. An independent Brett Ashley opened the way as the confused new woman of the modern era in *The Sun Also Rises*. Catherine Barkley in *A Farewell to Arms* defies social norms, but with purpose and quiet dignity, which in turn opens new avenues for Maria in *For Whom*

*the Bell Tolls*. Using Pilar as her guide, Maria quietly observes life in the ever-changing world around her; thus she builds confidence and social acceptance for the new generation of women in the twentieth century. Pilar maintains substantial physical as well as emotional strength and asserts her own form of therapeutic love for both Maria and the male protagonist; this love sustains them in life's challenges. Together they open a whole new world in *Across the River and Into the Trees* for women like Renata, who understands the goodness of a man, to share her observations, and moves on to successfully teach others in need. Women add to their pallet of nurturing and devotion the same powerful, active, and courageous characteristics that once were exclusively men's identity and sole directives in life. The female characters teach the softer, caring feminine qualities to the males. The heroine masters the world by understanding it, not by remaining docile and passive in a world of change. It is not accurate to assume that the macho hero is based on the ideal standard for men; rather it includes the female as well in a quieter and more dignified style. Hemingway exhibits the feminine version of his male "cojones" by recognizing that female heroism is important not only as a way of reclaiming women's heritage but also as correcting the male bias implicit in traditional discussions of the hero. Until the heroic experience of women has been thoroughly explored, Hemingway's female protagonists will forever be overlooked as an important part of every male protagonist's success.

Only by fully examining women's actions and reactions as well as their verbal responses to the ever-changing world can critics fully understand the Hemingway heroines. In addition, the women's psychological outlook would explain the many changes that were occurring. A further exploration of each woman and her perceptive

and intuitive abilities would provide a greater comprehension and awareness of the Hemingway heroine.



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