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"What They have Instead of God": The Relationship between Jake Barnes and Brett Ashley in Hemingway's "The Sun Also Rises"

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"What They Have Instead of God": The Relationship between Jake Barnes and Brett Ashley in Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises*

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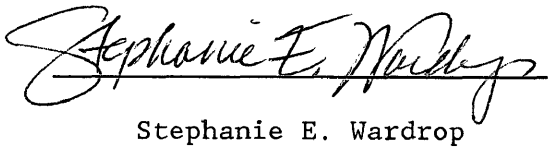

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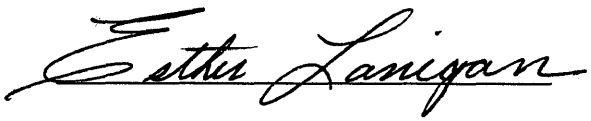

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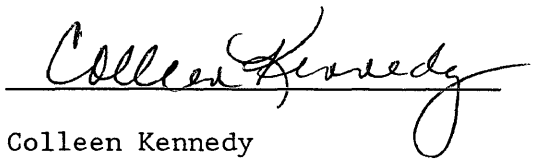

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ABSTRACT

While incorporating many of the typical themes of modernist literature, Ernest Hemingway's The Sun Also Rises employs a further disassociation through ambiguous gender characterizations. Through four sections, this thesis explores aspects of the relationship between characters Jake Barnes and Brett Ashley. The first reexamines Jake's frustrated desire for Brett, affection for Bill Gorton, and admiration for Pedro Romero through motifs of alienation and regeneration running through The Sun Also Rises and the short stories of In Our Time. Second, critical condemnations of Brett's characterization are reevaluated within the context of the cultural and social history of the 1920s, while the third section explores the depiction of gender relations in modernist literature and painting. Fourth, the ambiguous love affair between Brett and Jake is reassessed as a burgeoning friendship based upon mutual care and respect.

"WHAT THEY HAVE INSTEAD OF GOD":

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN JAKE BARNES

AND BRETT ASHLEY IN HEMINGWAY'S

THE SUN ALSO RISES

Despite many critical assertions to the contrary, Hemingway's first novel, The Sun Also Rises, traces the growth of friendship between its two main characters, Jake Barnes and Lady Brett Ashley. The novel traces the activities of a circle of expatriate writers and fallen aristocrats through Paris and Pamplona, narrated by foreign correspondent and former soldier Jake Barnes. Jake undergoes a process of moral regeneration just as Europe engages in political and social reconstruction. Both Brett and Jake personify the post-war struggle to define meaning in life and the modernist tension between the desire for isolation and affiliation, two popular themes of the literature and visual art produced in the mid-1920s. Most importantly, their ambivalent sexual relationship reflects the confusion prevalent in a society in which men and women can no longer automatically define themselves by their sex and role differences.

The relationship between Jake and Lady Brett Ashley is one of the most misunderstood in literary criticism. However, the relationship between Jake and Brett evolves from the frustration of unfulfilled romantic potential to a burgeoning friendship between equals, as Jake learns the necessity of "irony and pity"[1] and Brett adapts to her status as a new

woman in an old world.

In the novel, Brett functions as many things to many people, at least as Jake sees it. To Robert Cohn, she is "the promised land" (22); to the Count, a "simple exchange of value," for which he can pay ten thousand dollars for a weekend in Biarritz (33). Madame Duzinell, the concierge at Jake's hotel in Paris, defines Brett as a drunken "'species of woman'" (33), until she learns of Brett's title and encounters her when she is sober. Then Brett becomes "'an eccentric, perhaps, but quel qu'une'" (53). To Mike, she is "'a lovely piece,'" as he tells her three times, and Brett mocks his sexist "'You *are* a lovely lady'" by turning to Jake and saying, "'You *are* a lovely host'" (79). But in the words of critic Sam Baskett, Brett's true value lies in her ability to define the other characters, and these definitions provide the meaning of the novel. "To paraphrase the lady herself," Baskett says, "she is sort of what they have instead of God."2

I. Jake Barnes and the Impulses toward Isolation and Affiliation

Most critics agree with Peter Schwenger, a contemporary theorist who defines the distinctions between men's and women's writing, regarding Jake's character. Schwenger often examines Hemingway as an example of an overtly masculine writer; for Schwenger, Jake Barnes embodies many of the

characteristics the critic identifies as particularly masculine, "observ[ing] the changes in his own emotions with as much detachment as he observes the lay of the land, and with somewhat less detail."3

But Jake is not purely detached and remote, and this tension between Jake's desire for detachment and affiliation presents one of the most ambivalent aspects of the text. At times his self-consciousness surfaces, revealing his awareness of the manner in which his words may be interpreted by an anonymous reader, as when he describes Robert Cohn's athletic success at Princeton but hastily adds, "Do not think I am much impressed by that as a boxing title" (3). He cannot maintain complete disinterest in the affairs of his companions, either. For example, he maintains a less-than-journalistic interest in "dirt," evidenced when he asks Robert if "none of [his] exalted connections [are] getting divorces" (9-10). In fact, he admits harboring the "rotten habit of picturing the bedroom scenes of [his] friends" (13).

At the onset of the novel, Jake struggles to maintain an emotional distance. A foil to Jake, Robert Cohn still clings to anachronistic concepts of honor in his "childish, drunken heroics" and eagerness to "do battle for his lady love" (178). In one of the novel's last portraits of him, Robert lies face down in his hotel room after a round of fisticuffs with Mike, Jake, and Romero, still wearing the polo shirt he'd worn as an undergraduate at Princeton, "'a case of arrested

development'" (44). Cohn signifies the stereotypical hopeless romantic, "married by the first girl who was nice to him," (4) and follows Brett "like a steer" (141). Nonetheless, despite Jake's professed immunity to desire, he finds himself lying awake in his Paris hotel room fighting tears when he leaves Brett in the bar with Zizi and Count Mippipopolous.

The disordered relationships around Jake reflect the greater disorder of the world and thus Jake finds himself devising "the best way to get rid of friends" (11). Yet once these friends are absent, he finds himself lonely, and turns to prostitutes like Georgette from his "vague sentimental idea that it would be nice to eat with someone" (16), but this proves dissatisfying and Jake finds himself alone in his hotel room muttering, "'To hell with people'" (31).

Consequently, while attempting to maintain detachment, Jake articulates the desire for stronger emotional involvement, and his two chief pastimes express these warring impulses -- through drinking, he can maintain his distance, while the bullfight provides a manageable *aficion*, or, as he defines it, passion. By contrast, Bill Gorton presents an alternative to emotional isolation, while Mike Campbell and Robert Cohn emerge as emotional and spiritual bankrupts.

At the onset of the novel, Jake finds it possible to be "drunk in . . . [a] positive sense" (21), but he grows disillusioned with the anesthesia of inebriation as it begins

to erode the fiesta. Drinking only moves Mike from a witty cynicism to simple belligerence, prompting Bill to warn Jake to "'keep Mike from getting so tight. That kind of stuff is terrible'" when Mike baits and berates Cohn (145). Brett, too, realizes that she has "lost [her] self-respect" and "can't just stay tight all the time" (183).

Jake begins to learn that he enjoys the company of Mike and some of the others only when he is drunk, as their dinner parties take on the "ignored tension" of a war zone in which Jake must fight off the "feeling of things coming that you could not prevent happening" (145). Only if the drinking continues can Jake feel "it seemed they were all such nice people" (146). A passage deleted from the novel before publication reflects the circle's growing estrangement from one another in describing the initial mood of the Quarter as one of "principally contempt":

> Everybody seems to dislike everyone else. The only happy people are the drunks, and they, after flaming for a period of days or weeks, eventually become depressed.[4]

As Book Three opens, for Jake "the fiesta was finished" (227). The drinking can no longer stave off the anxiety: "I began to feel drunk but I did not begin to feel any better" Jake notes as, metaphorically, the fiesta begins to grow dark (227). After the party quits Pamplona, Jake briefly wishes he had followed Bill to Paris, but realizes that "Paris would have meant more fiesta-ing" and he was "through with fiestas

for awhile" (232).

Similarly, the secular religion of the bullfight begins to prove dissatisfying. In the bullfight Jake had found a purity and nobility, a contest in which "you didn't need any economic interest" (99). To Jake the bullfight represents the last honorable field of combat and the bullfighter the last embodiment of romantic adventure, for "nobody lives their life all the way up any more except bullfighters" in his estimation (10).

A growing desire for emotional connection surfaces in his appreciation of Romero's "real emotion" as opposed to the "fake emotional feeling" of the lesser bullfighters (168), and in his realization through Brett's personal connection to the dangers of the sport that it "was not nice if you cared anything about the person who was doing it" (217). Another blow to Jake's pure enjoyment of the sport comes when Mike corrupts the scene by borrowing money from Montoya and when a father of two is gored to death in the running of the bulls, "'all for fun'" (198).

Presumably, Jake's need to detach himself results from his combat experience. Jake has, to paraphrase Hemingway's Frederic Henry of A Farewell to Arms, no use for outmoded and meaningless concepts like honor and glory. He does not look back on the war as a scene of heroics but a site of loss, one in which he gave, in the words of the Italian colonel at the soldiers' hospital, "'more than [his] life'" (31). Only

Mike's attitude is more cavalier; he never bothered to collect his war medals and in a nightclub he gave away those he'd borrowed from a tailor, illustrating the carelessness that characterizes Jake's circle. But as the novel progresses, Jake rejects Robert's misplaced chivalry and Mike's carelessness and replaces them with Bill's brand of caring through "irony and pity."

When mentioned at all, the war to end all wars is never spoken of in glorious terms. Brett lost her first love to the war and her husband, Lord Ashley, returned to her too shell-shocked to sleep without a gun and repeatedly threatened to kill her. Jake, of course, has been left sexually and emotionally impotent and dislikes talk of the war. When dining with Georgette he fears they

> would probably have gone and discussed the war and agreed that it was in reality a calamity for civilization and perhaps would have been better avoided. I was bored enough (17).

He has seen and talked enough about death, unlike Robert, who still carries the misplaced honor of the previous age, having missed the war. Robert fears the idea of having lived "nearly half the time you have to live already" and wants to find the "real" South America; for Jake, mortality is "the one thing I don't worry about" (11). In contrast, Romero still possesses the arrogant delusion of the young that he is "'never going to die'" (126).

Perhaps reflecting the patriotism and conformism of the 1950's, Leslie Fiedler sees the use of the war as "a convenient tag for the failure of values and faith which converted a generation of young American writers to self-hatred, bravado, and expatriation"5 and views its depiction in the American novel as a "handful of cliches".[6] Yet given the fact that nine percent of British men under the age of fifty-five had been killed and another 1.6 million "gravely mutilated," such widespread carnage was bound to have a profound effect on Hemingway and the artists of his generation.[7] Robert McAlmon summed up the attitude he and many of his contemporaries shared, "the young man's resentful belief that the war had killed off, in Europe and England, the best of [his] generation for moralizing hacks and elders"8 and understanding this sentiment is crucial to understanding the novel. As critic Earl Rovit notes, "without the war as a causative background, these would be merely empty and sick people . . . but the war was a fact, and it was one which stripped the veil of pious sanctimony and patriotic veneer."[9] Still, one must question the standards by which Rovit judges these characters as "empty" and "sick" and realize he does not recognize the complexity of these characterizations in labeling them as such.

The war separates Jake from Robert in that it robs him, for the most part, of the boyish romanticism Robert still possesses. While Jake scoffs at Robert's attempts to emulate

a novel of "splendid imaginary amorous adventures", he nonetheless finds the novel "splendid" (9). Later, on the fishing trip with Bill, Jake reads a novel as gothic and sensational as Cohn's choice,

> a wonderful story about a man who had been frozen in the Alps . . . and his bride was going to wait twenty-four hours exactly for his body to come out on the moraine, while her true love waited too (120)

The words "true love" appear several times throughout the novel, and while Jake still enjoys a fictional romance, he no longer believes in its place in reality. Romance has induced in Robert and Frances -- the most jaded couple in the novel -- the exact opposite of Bill's credo, self-pity. After tossing aside his secretary for Frances, Robert plans to subsequently cast off Frances when he becomes infatuated with Brett by sending her to England with two hundred pounds. In the Select, Frances humiliates him in a display of the ugliest aspect of love. Mocking the writers' use of their private lives as source material, Frances advises Jake to avoid "scenes," "because you can't have scenes without crying, and then you pity yourself so much you can't remember any conversations that way'" (50).

In response, Jake banishes himself from the world of romantic intrigue. "'I don't give a damn any more,'" he tells Bill when asked about his feelings for Brett, but moments later adds, "'Only I'd a hell of a lot rather not talk about it'" (124). Jake finds it "awfully easy to be hard-boiled

about everything in the daytime, but at night it is another thing" (34) until he can risk emotional involvement as he does at the end of the novel bvy coming to Brett's aid.

But this is not to assert, however, that TSAR must be read as a classic bildungsroman. As critic Earl Rovit asserts, " a 'lesson' of self-growth is presented almost obliquely and almost beneath the conscious awareness of the narrator-protagonist."[10] Jake learns this lesson through Bill Gorton on the fishing expedition that stands as the emotional center of the novel. The episode begins with many images depicting the need for warmth against the "awful cold" (108), whether found in food, drink, literature, or intimate conversation.

On the first morning of the fishing trip, Bill is disappointed to wake up to find Jake "burying money," then relieved and approving to realize Jake is only hunting for bait. "'Working for the common good'" is one of Bill's responses to the alienation of the modern world, a code Brett Ashley comes to share in her realization that being good to people -- "'not being a bitch'" -- is "'what we have instead of God'" (245). In this fallen world, contempt and resentment are useless and self-destructive, as Mike and Robert have proven. Instead, in Bill Gorton's maxim, "'You ought to be ironical the minute you get out of bed. You ought to wake up with your mouth full of pity'" (115). Critic Robert Lewis has examined how Bill's principles parallel passages in

Ecclesiastes, the source of the novel's title, in its instructions to help others despite the world's instability and in its emphasis on companionship as "two are better than one".[11]

As in the Burgute passage, fishing trips provide epiphanic scenes in several other Hemingway works, signifying oases of peace amid scenes of destruction. Turning to the stories of In Our Time (1925), in "Now I Lay Me" the protagonist fights insomnia by visualizing perfect fishing streams, counting fish instead of sheep to drift off to sleep. The fishing trip in "The End of Something" takes place in a deserted mill town where deforestation has choked the lumber industry, and "Big Two-Hearted River" evolves in a countryside that has been razed by fire.

More importantly, the stories in In Our Time also link images of warmth and hunger with male camaraderie, of the tension between the desires for isolation and affiliation, and the problems of romantic involvement. "The End of Something" chronicles the break-up of Nick's and Marjorie's romance because, in Nick's words, "'It isn't fun any more'."[12] Turning their backs from the campfire and rejecting food, the couple denies themselves the basic pleasures of warmth and sustenance. Marjorie's romanticism angers Nick, as does her mastery of fishing, a skill he "taught" her. After a brief, subdued quarrel, Marjorie rows back to town, leaving Nick behind. In the story's companion piece, "The Three-Day Blow,"

Nick's friend Bill joins him, signalling to some critics Nick's preference for male companionship. But he finds solace in the knowledge that he could still salvage his relationship with Marjorie, that "there was not anything that was irrevocable."[13] Because Bill and Nick touch, while Marjorie and Nick do not, critics like Joseph Witt define homoerotic overtones within the story.[14] Emotional intimacy between men, however, does not necessarily reflect homosexual tendencies on their part, and Witt's assumption may reflect androcentric assumptions about the role of male friendships.

Similarly, one can easily identify an homoerotic aspect to Jake's admiration of Pedro Romero, the "best looking boy [he] had ever seen" (163) with "very nice manners" as well (175). If not overtly sexually attracted to Romero, Jake admires him as a model of independence and indomitability. To Jake, Romero seems "very far away and dignified," "standing straight and handsome and altogether alone in the room with the hangers-on" (163).

At the bullfight, as Jake filters his gaze through Brett's, she becomes his stand-in for a more intimate relationship with Romero. As he watches Brett watch the matador, Jake declares "Romero was the whole show. . . It was all Romero" (163). Importantly, Romero's technique in the bullring parallels both Romero's attraction for Jake and Brett's attraction for men like Robert Cohn, and, in fact, for Jake as well: "he dominated the bull by making him realize

he was unattainable" (168).

Perhaps because of Jake's fearful disdain for homosexuality, Romero remains unattainable to him, and Jake can only coax Brett to act upon her attraction as he cannot. In the bar, he encourages her to invite Romero over for a drink despite her reticence:

> 'I can't look at him.'
> 'He's nice to look at,' I said (184).

When she leaves with Romero, then, Jake may satisfy himself vicariously in engaging the two in a relationship he could not enjoy.

In another story from In Our Time, "Big Two-Hearted River," Nick has just returned from the war and enjoys self-restoration through the fire-building and food preparation that take on the ritualistic quality of Bill Gorton's mock-sacraments of wine and food. Almost as adamantly as Jake and Brett, he prefers solitude to the company of those who are "not one of us" (32): "Nick did not like to fish with other men on the river. Unless they were of your party, they spoiled it."[15] Like Jake's wound, Nick's fear of the deep swamp area could well signify a fear of sexuality, an inexplicable evil, modern malaise, post-war trauma, or a terror of the homoerotic experience.

Bill, on the other hand, recognizes the idiosyncracies of his contemporaries and laughs at them, for he possesses the capacity for "irony and pity" and to "rejoic[ing] in [his]

blessings" (122). He enjoys drink and humor as much as anyone else in the novel, unless it denegerates into a hurtful situation, as when Mike persists in belittling Cohn. More than any other character, Bill manages to care without being consumed or destroyed.

He displays compassion and pity for Cohn, later for "poor old Mike" (204), and for Jake as well. He is concerned about Jake's condition and his frustrated affair with Brett, and away from the social constraints that suppress intimate exchanges between men, Bill can express his affection for Jake:

> 'You're a hell of a good guy and I'm fonder of you than anybody on earth. I couldn't tell that in New York. It'd mean I was a faggot (116).

A desire for freer expressions of warmth may be read again in Jake's description of the aficionados around Montoya, where the exchange is acceptable as an

> embarrassed putting the hand on a shoulder or a 'Buen hombre.' But nearly always there was the actual touching. It seemed as though they wanted to touch you to make it certain (132).

The honesty and comparative intimacy with Bill solaces Jake, suggested in the images of warmth that end the episode, with Bill and Jake and Harris swimming under the warm sunshine, unconcerned and relieved that they have received "no word from Robert Cohn nor from Brett and Mike" (125). Harris decides to commemorate this event by giving them some fishing ties to "'remind [them] of what a good time we had'" (130).

II. Reassessing Brett Ashley

While many critics define Jake's disillusionment as manly detachment, frequently other critics, including feminists, judge Brett a "bitch" for her disenchantment. Leslie Fiedler labels her "the bitch goddess. . . the Lilith of the '20's,"[16] and Robert Lewis the "pagan fertility bitch-goddess,"[17] John Eldridge "a compulsive bitch,"[18] and Leon Linderoth a "bitch by circumstance only."19

These critics possess a rigid though inexplicable definition of womanhood that Brett thoroughly violates. She "never becomes a woman, really," Leslie Fiedler believes, and "no man embraces her without being castrated,"[20] but if she has been, as Fiedler laments, "mythicized rather then redeemed," one must ask from what and by whom Lady Ashley must be redeemed. Similarly, Theodore Bardake deems Brett "a woman devoid of womanhood" and an "exclusively destructive force."[21]

Such denigrations of Brett Ashley are not confined to the masculinist critical camp but include noted feminist critics as well. Sandra Gilbert, for example, identifies Brett as a "monstrous antifertility goddess."[22] Hoever, using the standards set by some of the pioneer feminist critics, Brett seems instead a model of female independence and strength. She is certainly not, for example, the female character Nina Baym finds in the standard American "melodrama of beset manhood," the "entrappers and domesticators" who "ensnare .

. . and deflect [men] from life's important purposes of self-discovery and self-assertion."[23] Brett also defies the eleven major stereotypes identified by reputed feminist critic Mary Ellman as the product of male writers and critics: Hemingway's Lady Ashley is not formless, passive, confined, pious, materialistic, spiritualistic, irrational, compliant, or unequivocally shrewish, though she may be said to be unstable.[24]

When other critics attempt to resurrect Brett's femininity, they employ the traditional male gaze and target Brett's beauty as her most admirable trait. For example, recent critics, such as Roger Whitlow, find Brett's redemption as "an individual whose female sexual appeal and general attractiveness were exceptional despite her bobbed hair."[25] He also objects to her association with homosexuals but explains this behavior as a result of her "mind disordered" by the war.[26]

In 1962, working out of an unliberated construction of gender roles, Mark Spilka also views Brett's bobbed hair as an emblem of her relinquished femininity, ignoring the fact that in the mid-1920's bobbed hair was a popular fashion. To him, Brett's refusal to grow her hair for Romero "means her role in life is fixed: She can no longer reclaim her lost womanhood; she can no longer live with a fine man without destroying him."[27]

Spilka also denies a woman the same desires as a man in

evaluating Brett's release "from her womanly nature" and "expos[ure] . . . to the male prerogatives of drink and promiscuity," a phrase that neatly underscores the double standard still imposed by much of the literary criticism of the 1960s.[28]

In the novel, Brett seems aware of her anomalous status as a new woman in an old world, especially in Spain, where rigid Catholic dictates still hold. Though ironic, Brett's reply to the Count's apporval of her "class" illustrates the roots of the traditional propriety she has not entirely rejected: "'Mummy would be pleased'" (58). She realizes that despite her title she is not considered a lady with a lower-case "l," for when Mike drunkenly urges her to "turn in early" with him, she admonishes him, "'Remember, there are ladies at this bar'" (79). And she exhibits her own sexism, perhaps, in objectifying men as she is objectified by her enthusiasm for Pedro Romero "'and those green trousers'" (165).

Unlike the British women in the "big, white car" who watch the fiesta through binoculars (208), Brett desires participation. She learns to drink from wine skins like Bill and Jake and understands their <u>aficion</u> for the bullfight, which she watches "fascinated" (139), seeing "why she liked Romero's capework and why she did not like the others'" (167), "absorbed in the professional details" (211), thereby gaining Jake's hard-won respect. But Spanish custom curtails her

liberty. Officials turn her away from the church because of her felt hat, and at the running of the bulls the men bar her participation, preferring her "as an image to dance around" (155).

Brett does not invite emotional involvement. Having seen love fail several times -- with her first attachment, who succumbed to the decidedly unromantic death of dysentery; Lord Ashley; and Jake at least as a potential love -- she instead seeks brief, enjoyable, trysts with romantic figures like writers and musicians and bullfighters that will allow her to withhold emotional involvement. She has lost the romantic idealism that Robert Cohn still posesses. In Frances' opinion, Robert postpones their marriage because he feels that "'if he marries [her], like he's always promised he would, that would be the end of the romance'" (51). By contrast, according to Jake, Brett has twice married men she has never loved (31).

Nevertheless, she is certainly not unfeeling and uncaring, though much of the sympathy she had been afforded in the narrative was deleted at F. Scott Fitzgerald's suggestion. For example, in the original text, Brett had only slept with Mike Campbell because they were both en route to the Riviera and could find only one hotel room with one bed, a questionable excuse that nevertheless explains the nature of their dubious engagement. She had only offered to accompany him out of pity, because he "was lonely and sick and

very companionable."[29] As Mike admits to Bill, "'She loves looking after people. That's how we came to go off together. She was looking after me'" (203). Brett reiterates Mike's assessment, characterizing her tryst with Cohn as something she thought "would be good for him" (83). Although impatient with his possessiveness, she is not unsympathetic, as she tells Jake, "'You know I do know how he feels. He can't believe it didn't mean anything'" (181).

In construing Brett as shameless and unfeminine, critics misinterpret her depiction as a woman who crosses over onto male-defined territories, who risks, for example, sexual infidelities, who indulges in liaisons without emotional attachment. Society conditions women to seek love, not physical gratification, but Brett reverses this. In discussing the contemporary female adventure as a quest for romance, feminist literary critic Ann Barr Snitow also identifies what androcentric critics condemn in Brett's characterization. "The ideal of an individual who is brave and complete is for men only," Snitow writes. She continues:

> Women are grounded, enmeshed in civilization, in social connection, in family, in love . . . while all our culture's rich myths of individualism are essentially closed to them. Their one acceptable moment of transcendence is romance.[30]

The nineteenth-century upper-class woman's former economic dependence on man necessitated a quest for love. Because she had to find a man to provide for and protect her,

she was socialized to seek her ideal man, to view an economic arrangement in the more palatable light of romantic fantasy. With Lord Ashley's money, his widow no longer needs a man for financial stability and thus does not need the attendant fantasy of courtship. She does not need to subscribe to the mythology of being swept away by passion to justify her sexual involvement. Instead, she consciously negotiates trysts, abandoning the social values of male seduction and female surrender. Androcentric critics object to this behavior because Brett does not conform to traditional western standards of womanhood and thus cannot be considered a "real" woman in their eyes but an aberration.

During the 1920s, Hollywood prepared readers to view characters like Brett as sexual predators through femme fatale images like Theda Bara and Clara Bow in films like Mantrap and Cleopatra. The "vamp" label applied to such characters perpetuated the myth that the sexually aggressive woman proves deadly, sucking the life blood out of the helpless man.

Consequently, from the novel's first publication, readers and critics alike have dismissed Brett as a "nymphomaniac." This charge persists through Chaman Nahal[31] and even contemporary feminists like Sandra Gilbert.[32] At the most extreme, contemporary critic Wolfgang Rudat believes she was a "nymphomaniac" only until she sleeps with Romero, who at last fulfilled her. Rudat cites as symbolic Romero's first name, Pedro, the Spanish form of Peter, slang for the penis

and signifying, in German, a rock. Since Romero was a waiter on the famous rock of Gibraltar, it follows that "the bullfighter's 'peter' possesses a durability which Brett's former lovers had not been endowed with."[33]

The penile tumescence of fictional characters aside, the characterization of Brett as a nymphomaniac reflects a society that still clings to the Victorian notions that women are devoid of sexual desire. Few contemporary texts on psychology or sexuality even mention nymphomania's existence as anything but a myth. In fact, James Leslie McCary, still considered one of the leading sexual behaviorists, stated in 1971, "few words in the language have been more misused in the practical application."[34] If it can be said to exist at all, nymphomania is an extremely rare phenomenon, stems from a neurotic compulsion, and affords its victims no pleasure. Because Brett evidently enjoys her sexual liaisons, she does not exhibit characteristics of "true" nymphomania. It is unfortunate that even feminist critics have chosen to label her with such an antiquated male-constructed term.

Certainly Brett may be considered promiscuous according to mainstream Protestant values in which a woman's sexuality must be hinted at but never made overt. But labelling any woman as promiscuous denotes an acceptance of the modern double standard by which society accepts premarital sexual relations for women only within the context of a monogomous and loving relationship, as observed in a 1980 study by

sociologist Ira Reiss.[35] Obviously, in the 1920s any such sexual liberation for women was condemned. Most importantly, labels of deviance like "nymphomaniac" and "promiscuous" are gender-specific and therefore maculinist.

It is easier to understand why earlier critics dismissed Brett's behavior as aberrant. Despite the popular belief that post-war modernism evoked a widespread sexual hedonism, evidence suggests that attitudes toward sexuality had not radically departed from the Victorian repression of the era before. According to an article by Leslie A. Hall in Journal of Contemporary History, sexual relations were considered, by and large, acceptable only when sanctioned by marriage. Evidence indicates that in the mid-1920's none of the major American medical colleges included birth control in their curricula[36] and a relatively conservative manual by Marie Snopes called Married Love sold half a million copies by 1918[37]. In such manuals, women were denied sexual inclinations while the normal male was considered a libidinous walking timebomb, the victim of a normal sexuality that was "a powerful natural force barely kept in check and in constant danger of arousal."[38] Norah March, author of Towards Racial Health, was in favor of sex education to "help boys . . . control themselves better."[39] According to March, the essential difference between the sexes was

> that woman's organism is less violent than the man's organism, because in man, the whole part that he has to play is one act only. Subsequently, the whole of his emotional

> condition is concentrated towards the performance of that act.[40]

The high sales of books like Married Love, which was no doubt borrowed and read by many others, reflect a curiosity and ignorance of sexuality that Hall and other historians have noted. Hemingway's knowledge about certain subjects seems vague at best: in "Hills Like White Elephants", for example, he describes abortion as an intake of air, which his friend Robert McAlmon attributed to Hemingway's ignorance of the medical procedure.[41]

This context explains early critics'condemnations of Brett's behaviour as cruel and unwomanly despite Hemingway's intent. A sexually ambiguous figure, Brett refers to herself as one of the "chaps," wears fedoras and short hair, and carries a first name traditionally reserved for males. As Jake tells Robert, "'Her name's Lady Ashley. Brett's her own name'" (38). Yet despite these traditionally masculine attributes, Brett is attractive in the conventionally feminine way, "built with curves like the hull of a racing yacht" (22). Clearly, in the modern age, men and women can no longer define themselves solely by their differences, and compared to the women Hemingway knew in Paris in the mid-1920's, Brett emerges as no anomaly. She owes her creation as much to these women as to the Lady Duff Twysden historically referred to as her model.

II. Prototypes for the Character of Brett Ashley

Gertrude Stein's influence on Hemingway at the time of the production of The Sun Also Rises has been well documented, but biographers and critics often ignore the considerable influence of other literary women on the novel. But when considered beside the women of the artistic circle of Montparnasse in the mid-1920's, Brett Ashley appears far less incongruous than many critics believe.

For example, Jane Heap and Margaret Anderson, editors of The Little Review, and Harriet Weaver, publisher of The Egoist, exercised considerable power and influence, braving obscenity charges for printing excerpts from Ulysses. Nancy Cunard's Hours Press published work by Pound, Cocteau, and Gide in addition to the first French translations of Lewis Carroll and the first work by Samuel Beckett. Similarly, Ethel Moorhead operated This Quarter magazine with Ernest Walsh, publishing some of Hemingway's first short stories as well as work by Kay Boyle, Djuna Barnes, Ezra Pound, and Carl Sandburg.

In the early 1920's, two women running bookshop/salons supported Hemingway's early work and attended boxing matches and bicycle races with him. Biographer Hugh Ford's description of Sylvia Beach echoes that of Brett Ashley, with her "mannish clothing" and cropped hair.[42] Her bookshop and lending library, Shakespeare and Company, provided a refuge for Hemingway in his early days in Paris. She published

Ulysses after it had been banned from publication as profane, and she turned down D. H. Lawrence's subsequent request to publish Lady Chatterley's Lover because she found its style, not its content, objectionable.

Opposite Shakespeare and Company on the rue de l'Odeon, Adrienne Monnier ran Le Maison des Amis de Livres, a bookstore that also served as a salon for the city's prominent artists and intellectuals, including Louis Aragon, Andre Gide, Andre Breton, Paul Valery, and Paul Claudel, in whose careers she took, in Ford's rather patronizing estimation, a "maternal interest."[43] Yet she was certainly more than a motherly emotional support. She published in her Le Navire d'Argent the first translation of Hemingway's "The Undefeated" into French, as well as work by e. e. cummings, William Carlos Williams, and T. S. Eliot's "The Love Song of J. ALfred Prufrock."

Another female influence was Kiki, artist, writer, model, and one of the most popular women in the Quarter. Her famous lovers include Modigliani and Man Ray, who used her as the model for some of his most famous photographs. Hemingway wrote the introduction to the English translation of Kiki's Memoirs. He genuinely admired the loose prose style of this "'woman who was never a lady'" and lauded her collection of reminiscences and drawings in his customary equation of writing with masculinity as more than just another book by "'present-day lady writers of both sexes'."[44]

In addition, American expatriate writer Djuna Barnes supplied more background for Brett Ashley's character (and perhaps the surname of the novel's male protagonist). Barnes travelled among the circle of male and female homosexual artists of Montparnasse, which may have suggested the portrayal of Brett's arrival at the Bal surrounded by the gay men Jake finds so distasteful (40). After escaping an early arranged marriage, Miss Barnes traveled with this lesser-known expatriate circle and illustrated her experiences -- particularly those within Natalie Barney's salon -- in her novels Nightwood and Ladies' Almanack.

Hemingway may also have been influenced by his friend Robert McAlmon, who also dealt frankly with homosexuality in Distinguished Air. McAlmon accompanied Hemingway on a visit to Pamplona, and his marriage of convenience to the writer Bryher may suggest what Brett seeks in her proposed loveless marriage to Mike Campbell. Like the fictional Lady Ashley, Bryher sought release from her traditional British aristocratic family, who, in McAlmon's words, "'treated [her] as helpless . . and in so doing ruined her capacity for full self-expression and enjoyment of life'."[45] (After their amicable divorce in 1927, Bryher married a Scottish novelist and they founded Close Up, a film magazine, and the publishing house Pool.)

The rapid social changes brought about by the first world war enabled Bryher, Djuna Barnes, Sylvia Beach, and the other

"new women" to enjoy such unprecedented freedom. Especially in Great Britain, during the war years, many women joined the work force to fill the vacancies of the fighting men in both munitions and non-military factories. Political groups like Christabel Pankhurst's Social and Political Union made great strides in improving the wage and working conditions for these women. Due to women's newfound income, the cosmetic and clothing industries prospered, with skirt lengths rising from just above the ankle to mid-calf, while some factory workers wore pants. Such behavior scandalized many Edwardians as evidence that women's morality was more susceptible to corruption than men's, particularly when women began frequenting pubs for an after-work drink. Many agreed with Lord Shaftesbury that working women "become utterly demoralized" and "if you corrupt the woman, you poison the waters of life at the very fountain."[46]

Before the war, the women's suffrage movement had begun to employ violence to win the right to vote that was eventually granted in Great Britain in 1918, due, in large part, to women's civilian and military efforts during the war. Between 1910 and 1911, Suffragettes chained themselves to railings, bit and kicked policemen, bombed the Coronation Chair in Westminster Abbey, committed arson, and slashed paintings they saw as objectionable, such as Velasquez's Venus.[47] Many underwent hunger strikes only to be force-fed, something Djuna Barnes experienced as a reporter in New York,

and rearrested.

By the time of TSAR's publication, there was an anti-feminist backlash that must have colored the readers' reception of a character like Lady Ashley. Historian Cynthia White describes the trend in women's magazines of the 1920s to "curb restlessness on the part of wives, and popularize the career of housewife and mother."[48] The British Daily Herald called for a renewal of the domestic training that many feared would lapse if women moved out of the domestic sphere:

> What of all the incidental mending that crops up, the care of house linen, the care of personal clothing? What of the nursing that has to be done when the man is ill, when the babies come along and have to be cared for? What of the shopping that has to be done?[49]

III. Gender Relations in Modern Art and Literature

Clearly these swift social changes created confusion about gender role expectation. Under the old order, men and women could be defined by their differences and assigned gender roles accordingly, as illustrated in TSAR by the American couple Jake meets on the train to Burguete. "'You know how the ladies are,'" the man states with good-natured confidence, while his wife happily parries with her own truisms regarding "'the way men are'" (86). Virginia Woolf believed that the women's movement forced the sort of "self-conscious" masculinity evoked by men like Hemingway.[50] Peter Schwenger concurs with Woolf and expands her theory. He

posits that much of the sexual ambiguity portrayed within modernist works like TSAR resulted from this change in women's status:

> A redefinition of themselves by women always necessitates some kind of readjustment by men: either a redefinition of manhood or else a reassertion of the old definition. . . Awareness must increasingly come down to particulars, and more than that, to complexities and ambivalences.[51]

Another aspect of this prevailing gender confusion surfaces in Hemingway's distrust of and discomfort with homosexuality, as is evident in TSAR. His homophobia surfaces in the passages in A Moveable Feast in which Gertrude Stein declares lesbianism genuine and male homosexuality distasteful and later in his reaction to witnessing a lovers' quarrel between Stein and Alice Toklas.[52] In TSAR, Jake is clearly annoyed to find Brett in the company of gay men. "'That whole show makes me sick,'" he declares as they dance with Georgette, and the definite reason Brett gives for enjoying their company may explain Jake's antipathy toward them as potential rivals(22). Like Jake, this group poses no bodily threat or promise and does not treat Brett as a sexual object in the way that Robert and Mike do. She obviously appreciates her freedom with this crowd when she tells Jake she hasn't been drinking, though "'When one's with the crowd I'm with, one can drink in such safety too'" (22). For Mark Spilka, howver, this scene as a "deliberate parody of normal love," ignoring the novel's questioning of "normal love" 's

definition.[53]

However, more recently, Spilka has become one of the major Hemingway critics to speak of the inherent androgyny in many of Hemingway's characters. This blurring and blending of traditional feminine and masculine characteristics appeared most emphatically in 1986, when The Garden of Eden was posthumously published. As Spilka revises his former views:

> The familiar 'bitches' and 'dream girls' of his fiction become androgynous alternatives (destructive and redemptive) rather than chauvinist fantasies, and [Hemingway's] strenuous defense of maleness becomes a part of a larger struggle with his own androgynous impulses.[54]

Like TSAR, modernist literature and Cubist visual art explore and blur the boundaries of gender difference. Both Hemingway and the Cubists could be said to reduce their subjects to a sort of sexlessness or ambisexuality; with her bobbed hair and men's felt hats, Lady Ashley stands, in a sense, as a fictive counterpart to one of Picasso's figures represented in Demoiselles d'Avignon. Both incorporate an abstraction to evoke the symbolic, as in Hemingway's use of the bullfight and the contrasting urban and pastoral scenes of Paris and Burguete, while Picasso also incorporates bulls and the Spanish landscape in his 1937 masterpiece, Guernica. Like the Cubists, Hemingway's style reduces images to essentials, omits detail, and employs a subtle complexity through simple lines and repeated patterns. His writing utilizes the dual layers Juan Gris used in his painting -- the

"architecture,"[55] or basic structure underlying the work's more representational aspect -- deriving a larger meaning through metaphor. Hemingway himself referred to his method as the principle of the iceberg, by which most of the detail is suggested and submerged.[56]

While Cubists focussed on dismantling structure, Purists like Fernand Leger and Maurice Raynall attempted an aesthetic and moral reconstruction. They painted with a clarity and objectivity, the rationality of the distanced observer -- what Apollonaire dubbed the "vers le cristal"[57] -- that Jake Barnes hopes to evoke as TSAR's narrator.

The fiction of the era further thematized androgyny. For example, Virginia Woolf's Orlando, published in 1928, relates how the titular character "was a man till the age of thirty; when he became a woman and has remained so ever since . . . But let other pens treat of sex and sexuality; we quit such odious subjects as soon as we can."[58] Written three years before The Sun Also Rises, Ford Madox Ford's Women and Men judged both sexes equal except for their prescribed societal functions, and concluded that neither sex treats the other with much empathy. Also published that same year, D. H. Lawrence's Fantasia of the Unconscious reflects a desire to clarify the confusion generated by the emergence of liberated women like Brett Ashley and her real-life counterparts.

Lawrence argues that there has been a recent "reversal of the old poles," with men becoming more passive as women

gain independence.[59] "'The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world,'" he declares. He further sarcastically sums up the "new woman":

> Nay, she makes man discover that cradles should not be rocked, in order that her hands may be left free. She is now a queen of the earth, and inwardly a fearsome tyrant. She keeps pity and tenderness her banners. But God help the man whom she pities. Ultimately she tears him to bits.[60]

The last two lines neatly echo the feelings of many Hemingway critics concerning Brett's treatment of Robert Cohn.

Lawrence continues to reaffirm the essential difference between the genders, issuing a warning that parallels what both Brett and Jake discover through the course of their adventures in Paris and Pamplona -- "'When [one] makes the sexual consummation the supreme consummation, even in his *secret* soul, he falls into the beginnings of despair'."[61] Action is the province of men, for Lawrence, but in his own terms it can be argued that Brett and the other new women of the 1920's were struggling to be the "pioneers" of their own lives.[62]

Clearly Lawrence attempts to address and alleviate a prevalent sense of confusion. In an essay written the same year TSAR was published, "Warfare in Man and Among Men," Lawrence S. Morris gives an explanation for works like Lawrence's and Ford's that wrestle with the problem of the emancipated woman. It can also be read as an explanation for even contemporary critics' condemnations of Brett's portrayal. "We have received new information too fast to digest it

. . . " he surmises. "Until we are emotionally convinced that the old values are gone, we shall not begin to lay down our generalizations" about gender roles.[63]

IV. An Ambiguous Love Affair

Certainly Hemingway intends for the love affair between Brett and Jake to comprise one of the most ambiguous aspects of the novel, for it is uncertain whether they had engaged in an intimate romantic relationship before the experiences recounted. If they had met when Jake was in the hospital recuperating, they could not have engaged in a sexual relationship because of his injury. However, the passage in Jake's Paris hotel room leaves the reader free to imagine that a sexual encounter occurs even if intercourse could not be achieved:

> "'Darling,'" she said.
> Then: "'Do you want me to send him away?'" (54)

Later in this scene, the Count departs and Brett joins Jake on his bed:

> . . . I was lying with my face away from her. I did not want to see her.
> 'Sent him for champagne. He loves to go for champagne.'
> Then later: 'Do you feel better darling? Is the head any better?' (55).

Hemingway maintains that Jake's sexual dysfunction stems from purely physical causes. To him Jake does not possess ambivalent feelings toward his sexuality but simply cannot

engage in intercourse. For example, in a 1958 interview with George Plimpton, Hemingway stated that Jake's

> testicles were intact and not damaged. Thus he was capable of all normal feelings as a *man* but incapable of consummating them. The important distinction is that his wound was physical and not psychological and that he was not emasculated.[64]

Similarly, in a letter written to Thomas Bledsoe seven years earlier, Hemingway again denies any psychological disturbance on Jake's part:

> It came from a personal experience in that when I had been wounded at one time there had been an infection from pieces of wool cloth being driven into the scrotum. Because of this I got to know other kids who had genito urinary wounds and I wondered what a man's life would be like after his penis had been lost and his testicles and spermatic cord remained intact. I had known a boy that happened to. So I took him and made him a foreign correspondent in Paris, and, inventing, tried to find out what his problems would be when he was in love with someone who was in love with him and there was nothing they could do about it.[65]

But given Jake's preternatural need for emotional distance and the popular conception of male sexuality as fearfully volatile (which will be discussed later), Jake's impotence can be read as a form of self-protection. In fact, Hemingway described TSAR as a cautionary tale about promiscuity,[66] a danger Jake avoids by concealing his psychosexual problems by his more obvious physical incapacities. F. Scott Fitzgerald identifies

Jake's wound as a "sort of moral chastity belt" in a letter written to Hemingway before the novel's publication.[67]

In viewing the love affair between Brett and Jake, critics reflect an androcentric bias. To Chaman Nahal, for example, their relationship is "a situation beyond hope,"[68] and to Robert Lewis, Brett and Jake share a "sick love, a hypochondriac love."[69] To Leslie Fiedler, Jake functions as Brett's "pimp," the "priest of the bitch-goddess"[70] and to Roger Whitlow Jake remains a "psychological cripple"[71] who "consistently asks for" the pain Brett causes him.[72] In a 1962 essay, Mark Spilka discounts the possibility of love between them because he considers Brett to be overwhelmingly masculine. He defines men's and women's social roles in a rigidly masculinist light when he declares that

> when men no longer command respect and women replace their natural warmth with masculine freedom and mobility, there can be no serious love.[73]

But neither Jake's impotence nor Brett's hedonism prevents the possibility of romantic involvement between them. Rather, both have abandoned hope for the kind of successful emotional attachment that may have seemed possible before the war disrupted their lives, and both struggle to find a form of attachment without possession.

Throughout the course of the novel, Brett emerges as quite similar to Jake in her growing disillusionment and fear of emotional involvement. But in his more recent essay, Mark

Spilka points out that more than Jake or any other character in the novel, Brett is a survivor, a woman who learns from her mistakes and tests the thresholds of this new world. To him, Romero is the hero of the novel, but what he says of Romero may also be applied to Brett, whose "integrity does not depend on a [wo]man's favor or approval, but is independently achieved."[74]

After Brett's arrival in Paris, she expresses love for Jake as well as her fear of losing him as she's lost her other romantic partners. "'Love you?'" she says, "'I simply turn all to jelly when you touch me!'" but adds "'I don't want to go through that hell again'" (26). She cannot yet afford the emotional involvement or stability she defines as "quiet": "'I couldn't live quietly in the country. Not with my own true love,'" she tells Jake when he suggests they escape together (55). But she can settle for a temporal domesticity with Robert, for she telegrams Jake from her weekend in San Sebastian that she is "very quiet and healthy" (69). She has enjoyed a sexual encounter, now considered as "healthy" a desire for women as for men, without facing emotional entanglement since she does not consider Robert a romantic partner.

While Jake's desire for Brett results in his "blind, unforgiving" jealousy of Cohn (99), he remains, unlike Cohn, aware of her less admirable qualities but fond of her nonetheless. For instance, after she arrives drunk at his

hotel room late one night, he thinks, "This was Brett that I felt like crying about. Then I thought of her walking up the street. . . and of course in a little while I felt like hell again" (34). More than any other male character in the novel, Jake understands her. He appreciates the way her eyes can hold his for long intervals, and realizes the vulnerability her strong facade hides: "She looked as though there were nothing on earth she would not look at like that, and really she was afraid of so many things" (26). His perception of her vulnerability also affords him the role of the stronger partner in their relationship.

By the end of the novel, they emerge as friends, as equals. After his lesson in irony and pity, Jake realizes that with Brett he "had not been thinking of her side of it" and characterizes his role in their relationship as "an exchange of values" in which he'd been "getting something for nothing" (148). Brett, in turn, realizes she enjoys a form of intimacy with Jake she could never have with Romero. When Brett reads Romero's palm as they sit in a bar, Romero demands her undivided attention. "'Say it to me. Not to your friend,'" he commands when Brett addresses Jake (186). Romero then clarifies his primary allegiance a few lines later: "'The bulls are my best friends'" (186). When she considers Robert and Mike and Romero and all her other lovers, Brett realizes that Jake is "the only person [she's] got" (181).

Brett becomes Jake's equal in her appreciation of the

bullfight and, as Sam Baskett assesses, in "sharing a more profound appreciation of the 'modern temper'."[75] Robert Lewis also identifies their relationship at the end of the novel as an "unreasoning passion" transformed "through a period of bitter awareness to . . . a relationship of responsibility and care.[76] After learning the value of fellowship from Bill, Jake is able to accept Brett in this capacity. Thus in the final scenes, Jake does not respond to Brett's call for help from a slavish devotion but from the concern of a friend.

This lesson also has its parallel in modernist visual art. After all the "fiesta-ing," Brett and Jake learn what Purist painters Amedee Ozenfant and Le Corbusier (Charles-Edouard Jeanneret) described in 1918 as the difference between joy and pleasure. As paraphrased by art historian Christopher Green, "pleasure, they believed, is unbalanced, joy is balanced . . . pleasure satisfies appetites, joy satisfies the need for order in life, pleasure satisfies passing whim, joy satisfies something constant in us'."[77]

Malcolm Bradbury describes the gender lesson of TSAR as a "new romanticism" in which Brett and Jake learn to differentiate between false experience and true joy "without forgoing the sense of modern trauma or crossing the line beyond justly expended emotion."[78] In essence, a middle ground is found somewhere between Brett's and Jake's early emotional isolation and Robert's maudlin sentimentality, in a more directed emotion signified by the baton of the traffic

policeman at the novel's conclusion. At her Spanish hotel, Brett and Jake enjoy the simple pleasures of food and cigarettes and wine but no longer drink to the point of inebriation. Most importantly, their relationship forever loses its sexual energy when Jake wistfully recognizes that love can exist between them solely as a "pretty" idea (247).

Consequently, their affair can be read as romantic in the purest sense -- a chaste affection based upon mutual respect and shared experience. After Mike and Bill and the others scatter, Brett and Jake continue their relationship on a more egalitarian plane.

The Sun Also Rises reflects gender relations in a society beginning to cast off such traditional definitions of masculinity and femininity. Like the other modernist arts, the novel utilizes ambivalent and androgynous characterizations of men and women to reflect a society in which, increasingly, traditional characterizations of relationships between the sexes are freed from the categories imposed upon them.

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