

Should We Still Call Her a New Woman? :

A Meta-Analysis on the Critical Reception of Lady Brett Ashley

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I. Introduction

Lady Brett Ashley, the heroine in Ernest Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises* (1926: hereafter noted as *SAR*), identifies with many different depictions of women throughout twentieth century history. Kathy Willingham, a notable female Hemingway scholar, mentions that "of [Hemingway's] many characters, specifically females, [Brett] has provoked the most disagreement, controversy, and perhaps, interest" (33). Throughout the history of critical reception over ninety years, there has been a trend in Hemingway studies that marginalizes Brett through a certain kind of essentialism, assigning roles, such as "the fatal woman of the twenties" (Bloom 2) or a "nymphomaniac" (Tate 10), both of which would heavily depend on the male-oriented ethos of the historical period. However, even though Brett was thought to be inconsequential for almost a half-century after the novel's publication, critics did not falter in their attempts to identify her role in the novel by different names. Until recent years, these definitions were made rather harshly.

With the rise of feminist readings in the 1980s, Brett seems to gain a much fairer depiction thanks to the efforts of female scholars. They claimed that women in Hemingway's works have been "represented as sexualized, conflicted, and deeply problematic" (Barlowe 25) and "adhere very closely to roles and functions traditionally prescribed by our society as models for female, particularly the woman as sexual partner" (Garcia 9). Their assertions, not only on women but also more specifically on Brett Ashley through gender politics have gained great attention in Hemingway studies. Harold Bloom, the influential critic, published *Brett Ashley* in 1991 in his Major Literary Characters series and wrote "whose novel is it anyway? Take Brett out of it, and vitality would depart" (2). Brett Ashley's redemption had begun, and it was time to recognize her importance and identify her by a new name: a new woman.

Wendy Martin, a female Hemingway scholar, submitted an influential essay

in 1987 titled “Brett Ashley as New Woman in *The Sun Also Rises*,” which became a touchstone for redeeming Brett. In the essay Martin claims that Brett is as important a character as Jake and they “best represent the shift in the perception of gender following World War I” (65). Brett then became a more complete historical figure one worthy of attention, an idea which almost became a common understanding with regards to Brett among Hemingway scholars. However, in opposition to Martin’s position, Michael Reynolds, an authority on Hemingway’s biography, saw Brett as “Hemingway’s sophisticated version of the screen vamp” (59). His interpretations stick rather closely to artistry of Hemingway’s writing. Reynolds examined dual features of the new woman, and concluded that, contrary to Martin’s ideas, Brett did not meet the criteria.

What is striking about these two opposing positions is that both Martin and Reynolds have a good reason to believe what they do. Apart from who is right and wrong on this issue, the discrepancy between Martin and Reynolds raises many fundamental questions regarding Brett. For one, why is such an argument taking place in the end of the 1980s and not soon after the publication of *SAR*? Second, why is Brett identified as new woman when flappers were so mainstream in the mid-1920s? Third, is Brett a new woman or flapper, or something else?

In this paper, beginning with a meta-analysis on the history of critical reception toward Brett Ashley, I will first spotlight the historical processes that prevented Brett from gaining critical attention as she has now, and explain the inevitable process that took place with regards to her identification. Secondly, it will be necessary to examine whether there was a political agenda behind constructing the image of Brett Ashley. Thirdly, through reviewing and analyzing traits of late Victorian woman, the New Woman, and flappers, I will identify Brett in my own way.

II. Early Critical Reception of Brett Ashley

When *SAR* first appeared in the critical arena in 1926, early Hemingway critics paid greater critical attention to the narrator Jake Barnes, the war-wounded and allegedly impotent journalist, than to the voluptuous, overwhelming, but conspicuously beautiful and male-domineering character Lady Brett Ashley. Soon after the novel’s publication, Allen Tate, a prominent poet and critic, commented in 1926 that Brett is “a device” in the novel which “do[es] not improve it; but only extends its appeal” (43). His argument highly

valorized Jake's importance and made little importance of Lady Brett Ashley. Thirty years later, in the 1950s, the highly influential critic Malcolm Cowley also did not find much importance in Brett. "Brett was a pathetic brave figure," he wrote, "but the pathos has been cheapened by thousands of imitation Brett's in life and fiction" (25). Although Cowley's point did not explicitly stigmatize Brett, it seemed to unintentionally transform Brett's character into a miserable and wicked woman. When he employed the phrase "pathetic brave figure" coupled with words such as "pathos" and "cheapened," it suggested that Brett should not be kept as a role model either in fiction or in real life.

As is expected, indifference toward Brett seemed to continue in the coming years. Brett became a literary personification of misogyny. In 1960, Leslie Fiedler, one of the most influential critics of the twentieth century, expressed brusquely: "Brett never becomes a woman really" (319). Although Fiedler was using his work *Love and Death in the American Novel* to criticize the absence of women in Hemingway's novels at large, he also unintentionally exposed his deep-rooted chauvinism through his *ad feminam*¹ comment toward Brett that bluntly appealed to the readers' prejudice against women. Later in 1970, Phillip Young and Mann, highly important early Hemingway scholars, discussed Brett with an *ad hominem*² rhetoric. Their argument happened to appeal not only to readers' prejudice against women, but also to the readers' feelings and special interests rather than to their reason. Young and Mann quote a passage from a letter of F. Scott Fitzgerald addressed to Maxwell Perkins, the editor of Scribner's & Sons, that reads: "[Fitzgerald] wrote to Perkins that—'perhaps because I don't like the original'—he didn't like Brett in the novel" (31).³ This *ad hominem* rhetoric presents two problems. One: While taking advantage of the literary legitimacy bestowed to Young and Mann in the American scene, it secretly legitimizes Fitzgerald confounding the "original" Duff Twysden⁴ to fictive character Brett Ashley. Moreover, it unintentionally encouraged readers to compound fiction with reality when reading a text; meaning that one may define a character of fiction by one's own experiences regardless of whether or not they have anything to do with the text.

At this point, the analysis of Brett's character reached an aggravating place. Since it was obvious that male critics were generally unconcerned with female characters, Brett had no hope for redemption. Literary discussion of Brett during this time took on an air of misunderstanding and debasement.⁵ In fact, since the first generation of Hemingway scholars possessed an undeniably "male-oriented" (Beegel 276) focus and ideology, it grounded certain

archetypal “male imposed stereotypes” (Broer xiii) that made minorities, including women, difficult to approach within Hemingway’s text. Such a gender-biased trend caused Jake’s further dominance in the novel; Brett’s existence would be important only in so far as it served to explain and sustain the vividness of the male protagonist Jake.

III. History, Politics, and Female Hemingway Scholars

While Young’s theory of “code hero continued to be influential in the 1970s” (Beegel 281),⁶ the male scholars’ unconscious and misogynistic mud-slinging contest over Brett was gradually beginning to wane by 1975, when large a collection of Hemingway’s manuscripts became available at the National Archives. This opened new doors for second-wave Hemingway biographies⁷ which contributed to demystifying many aspects of Hemingway’s notion of maleness. By the end of the 1970s when the so-called “Hemingway industry”⁸ began to explode, more than a handful of scholastic reader’s guides including Arthur Waldhorn’s *A Reader’s Guide to Ernest Hemingway*, Linda Wagner-Martin’s *Ernest Hemingway: Five Decade of Criticism*, and Jackson Benson’s *The Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway: Critical Essays*, were published, undoubtedly making Hemingway accessible to more readers. While such burgeoning of the Hemingway industry invited a wider audience and more female Hemingway scholars,⁹ American university campuses were simultaneously encountering a sea change in the 1970s after such watershed moments as the incident at Kent State, the cease-fire in the Vietnam War, the Equal Rights Movement, and affirmative action policies. After campus protest nationwide, universities previously closed to women and minorities were slowly beginning to open doors¹⁰ to them, which ultimately brought “a highly organized and extremely angry feminist movement” (Beegel 281) that would later, gradually, begin to redeem Brett Ashley’s failed status.

Although grounds for redemption were quietly building in the early 1980s, Brett still had to wait for the feminist movement to explode. Linda Patterson Miller, one of the very early and influential female Hemingway scholars, illustrated the difficulty of the feminist presence during the era saying: “instead of castigating Hemingway, female scholars such as these [Linda Wagner-Martin and Sandra Whipple Spainer] have collectively celebrated his ‘muscular’ prose” (9), and also, female scholars “[did] not for the most part make moral pronouncement, as did Edmund Wilson” (9). Miller tells us that female scholars

were not feminists yet and they had to behave in a certain strategic way to fight for their rights of equality; this tiptoeing around issues did not yet allow them to fully confront and deal with the deeply-rooted discrimination towards women seen in both societal and fictional realms. Jamie Barlowe, a female Hemingway scholar, explains in another instance that though female scholars began discussing problems surrounding SAR, “its context [was] generally unacknowledged, except by each other” (24).¹¹ In sum, female scholars still had to be strategic about their presence in the early 1980s.

In the early 1980s, however, the situation for the feminists in the American academies was about to change, completely, from an external impact when the new political power was indirectly pressuring the American academies to comply with their conservative political beliefs. Scholars of the Vietnam War generation who were just beginning to earn tenures in American academies were horrified by the emergence of a new conservatism called the “New Right.”¹² Liberal scholars openly fought against the factions that aimed “to restore supposedly traditional values and practices” and wanted to “uphold gender roles and sexual mores” (Barbieri and Twite “The Triumph”). It is not difficult to imagine what a great menace the twelve years of Republican presidencies (1981 to 1993) and the rampant New Rights were to liberals in the American colleges who were now experiencing serious downsizing of the universities and a double-digit unemployment rate outside the campuses. American academies were fighting against the New Right, prevalent throughout the country, with their new rhetorical weapons: political correctness, multiculturalism, freedom of choice for women, equal opportunities for minorities.¹³ With such weapons, it was time for the feminist Hemingway scholars to undergo a total overhaul.

IV. The Fall of the “Code Hero,” and the Rise of Feminists

The mid-1980s were perhaps the most critical moment in the history of Hemingway studies: Some may call it a Hemingway Renaissance. After the JFK library in Boston made Hemingway’s manuscripts public in 1980, many new publications of Hemingway works were published.¹⁴ Among the books published during that time were: *Ernest Hemingway Dateline: Toronto, The Complete Toronto Star Dispatches, 1920-1924* (1985), *Dangerous Summer* (1985), *The Garden of Eden* (1986), and *The Complete Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway* (1987). Along with the emergence of such posthumous works, there appeared the most influential third-generation biographies of Jeffery Meyers,

Michael Reynolds, and Kenneth Lynn, that demystified the legends of previous Hemingway studies and brought about new critical attention. *The Garden of Eden* brought a new and prompt urge for reassessment of complex gender issues found in Hemingway's work such as male-androgyny, bisexuality, and lesbianism. It was Kenneth Lynn's biography *Hemingway* (1987) that eradicated the deep-rooted mythology of misogyny, which previous scholars had never bothered to criticize. This biography was most ground-breaking in that his psychoanalytic analysis nailed down Hemingway's notion of androgyny, a question previously raised by a revolutionary Hemingway scholar Mark Spilka in *Hemingway's Fauntleroy: An Androgynous Pursuit* (1982). Lynn's work dealt with all kinds of sexual confusion concealed in Hemingway's works, all of which the early studies had ignored. According to Beegel, Lynn's 'theory of androgyny' completely debunked and overtook the "'wound theory' and notion of 'code hero'" (Beegel 291).

The fall of the long dominating Phillip Young's "wound" and "code hero" theory generated a crucial turning point in the history of Hemingway studies: The fall of male chauvinism, total reassessment, and the birth of the a new order in interpreting Hemingway's works. The birth of the new order completely changed the map of Hemingway studies. Although Hemingway "appears as a blood-and-guts soldier in the adventure magazines and as an expert and lusty sportsman, drinker, and traveler in the bachelor magazines; and as a celebrity" (Earle 4) to the public, Hemingway scholars today no longer believe such posturing was pure Hemingway, but rather a fictive, popular representation of the author that the mass media had invented. While it is true that Hemingway defended his masculinity in public, as seen in the Max Eastman incident in the mid-1930's when Hemingway pushed Eastman, the founding editor of the *Masses*, by the chest and had a physical fight over Eastman's critique on Hemingway's style in *New Republic* in which Eastman had said that Hemingway possessed "a literary style, you might say, of wearing false hair on the chest" (Eastman 176). In his biography, Lynn illustrates the episode and details how Hemingway accosted Eastman: "What do you mean accusing me of impotence?" Hemingway demanded Eastman see that his chest was "hairy enough for anybody" (Lynn 401). He was not trying to exhibit his masculinity, he was simply demanding fairness.

Lady Brett Ashley, who had been abducted for a half century and confined by the chains of alleged misogyny, was finally during this time ready for her redemption. When Lynn and Spilka's notion of androgyny had completely

thawed out the erratic and eccentric nature of Hemingway's gender and sexuality, it was finally the moment for female Hemingway scholars to fight for their right to equality both in reality and fiction. However, not all female scholars naively endorsed Brett. Pamella Farley, an early critic, wrote, Brett is "a perversion of femininity" (Farley 32), and Linda Wagner-Martin, one of the earliest female Hemingway scholar, wrote the "woman character exists primarily to give the Hemingway character another dimension...strangely devoid of woman" (Wagner 146). In contrast to female scholars who did not inquire about issues of gender, sexuality, and misogyny and did not feel the need to overextend their analysis for redeeming female characters, many female Hemingway scholars did come out as feminist in many different ways under the New Right era. At the very end of the 1980's, a group of female revisionists such as Susan F. Beegel and Linda Patterson Miller emerged to explain that the early critics' disregard of Brett's pristine nature had deprived Brett of her importance in the novel. Many feminist Hemingway scholars, and sympathetic male scholars, now began resisting ignorance, misunderstanding, and misidentification in the early discourses directed at female characters, and fought to redeem women in Hemingway's fiction.

V. The Rise of the New Woman and the New Order

It was not until the emergence of feminist critics in Hemingway studies in the late 1980's that Brett slowly began to gain critical attention that illuminated her existence and importance in the work. Before the Ronald Reagan era, Brett Ashley was long confined in the vault of the men's locker room by patriarchal oppression. Delbert Wylder, a progressive Hemingway scholar, attempted in 1980 a rescue mission for Brett in his essay, "Two Faces of Brett: The Role of the New Woman in *The Sun Also Rises*," which became a groundbreaking initiative for the female revisionists. It defined for the first time that Brett "is obviously, 'the new woman' or 'twentieth century woman,' breaking from the strictures of Victorianism" (91). Following Wylder's identification of Brett, Wendy Martin, an influential Hemingway scholar, in 1987 attempted the second rescue mission with her highly influential essay "Brett Ashley as New Woman," which tremendously altered Brett's despised status and became a highly inspiring touchstone. Since Wylder's initiative still left some room for discussion,¹⁵ Martin strongly demanded that Brett redeem herself through a new identification. She states that "the new woman rebelled against patriarchal

marriage and, protest[ed] against social order that was rooted in female biology, she refused to play the ethereal other” (68). This entitled Brett to be identified as one of these new women who began to emerge in the late nineteenth century and were free from sexual oppression and societal expectations. Martin examined Brett’s behavior and compared her common traits with the New Woman’s: “the new woman’s radical challenge to the traditional social structure is seen in Lady Brett Ashley, who has stepped off the pedestal and now roams the world. She dares to frequent places and events previously off limits to her, such as the bar and the bullfight” (68). Martin contributed greatly in granting her a new status that legitimized Brett as a historical figure worthy of attention.

Many Hemingway scholars concurred with the label of new woman given to Brett, and very rarely does one find opposing positions. The new woman theory has now become common understanding when it comes to Brett Ashley. Following Martin’s thesis, Sibbie O’Sullivan, one of the early female critics, criticized in 1988, earlier Hemingway criticism saying that “it had undervalued Hemingway’s intuitive awareness” and disregarded “Hemingway’s approval of the ‘New Woman’” (76). Also, as an authority of Hemingway studies, James Nagel joined this new insight and endorsed Brett as new woman in his essay included in *The Cambridge Companion to Hemingway*. Nagel confirmed that “Brett is by no means the first representation of a sexually liberated, freethinking woman in American literature but rather an embodiment of what became known as the ‘New Woman’ in nineteenth-century fiction” (92). Additionally, *Hemingway and Woman: Female Critics and Female Voice* published in 2002, and written by seventeen female Hemingway scholars, is a quintessential example of how the feminist approach that valorizes Brett Ashley has considerably contributed to the entire reading of Hemingway’s works and developed into a new order in the twenty-first century for Hemingway texts.

The new order that aims to overturn the embedded patriarchal prejudice directed toward women has penetrated into all kinds of representations of femininity hidden in all of Hemingway works. It certainly helped to redeem minor characters, minor themes, and marginal traits. In the climate of contemporary Hemingway studies, Brett is no longer considered neither simply “a device” nor a “cheapened” anti-model nor a woman who would accept *ad feminam* and *ad hominem* argument, nor a Victorian woman who complies obediently with patriarchal oppression, but instead the “new woman” that Martin defined her to be. At the time, the new order functioned as a *deus ex machina*¹⁶ generating insights for new types of recognition and authorization

toward what was previously the unrecognized. The new order demanded fairness and compassion, and it relieved the anger of the real victims who were despised through the discriminating and condemning historical discourses. In other words, the emergence of the concept of “new woman” seems not only to motivate a new order but also to relieve the real life victims with tenderheartedness. The relieved victims were, in Cowley’s case, the “thousands of imitation of Bretts in life and fiction” (25), meaning both the thousands of Brett imitators in real life outside the text, and thousands of writers in real life who imitated Brett in their own novels. In Fiedler’s case, the victim was a real life woman “who never became a woman really” (319). In Young and Mann’s case, the victim was the real living British expatriate Duff Twysden whom Fitzgerald called “original.”

However, there is a distinctive feature we must not overlook in this new order which is that it only seems to be a symptomatic treatment against misogynistic argument, and its foundation seems as fragile as the logic of misogynistic argument. The new order is fundamentally prescribed by an *ad hominem* rhetoric appealing to peoples’ feelings just like that of the early discourses. It has essentially no logical or explicable reasoning: It is an order with no foundation. We must be alert to the fact that the new order is currently widely recognized and supported only because it relieved the pain of subjugated people, and not because it explained further Brett’s nature. In other words, the new order simply healed and worked off the victims’ frustration: it did not redeem the Brett who was abducted from the text to the external world.

VI. Is Lady Brett Ashley a New Woman?

Deus ex machina, the new order’s rhetorical strategy, worked very well to put away misogynistic arguments, and is still considered to be the unquestionable solution. However, we must not be so naïve to its consequence: Brett Ashley is still in the vault. It is true the *deus ex machina* resolved the entanglements engendered by the “phallogocentric critical legislators” (Willingham 35), but it simply employed an *ad hominem* tactic to counter them. Even though it contributed in generating a new order that completely muscled off the long dominating male-oriented discourses from the battlefield of misogyny, it has also brought up many significant intrinsic questions worthy of attention. What kind of truth-generating-system made her a new woman? Is it historical truth or political truth or logical truth that is making her a new woman? Is

Brett a new woman? To answer these epistemological questions, it is crucial that we ask what the identities of a new woman are, and then reconsider the effectiveness and validity of the *deus ex machina*.

It is very strange to see how the history of Hemingway studies has never explicitly questioned whether Brett is a new woman. Although Michael Reynolds mentioned in his essay “The Sun in Its Time: Recovering the Historical Context,” in the same year as Martin’s new woman theory, that “quite obviously Brett Ashley is not a new woman” (59),¹⁷ this remark has been heavily marginalized and one can find no supporting opinions toward it. Lois Rudnick defines in *The Oxford Companion to Women’s Writing in America* that the “New Woman” era (1890-1920) was a period that defined “women as independent, physically adept, and mentally acute; and able to work, study and socialize on a par with men” (Rudnick 630-31). Rudnick’s definition informs us that Brett is not an archetypal new woman, since many of her obvious features don’t quite fall into accord with it: In the novel, Brett is still dependent on men both spiritually and financially. It is quite mysterious to find that Martin mentions, “[Brett] is still very much dependent on men, who provide an arena in which she can be attractive and socially active as well as financially secure” (71) while also claiming Brett is a new woman. It is clear that Martin excluded female independence and autonomy as necessary conditions for a new woman, but rather stressed their sexual role prescribed by men which totally disagrees with Rudnick’s definition of a new woman: “Brett represents Hemingway’s idealized rendering of the woman free of sexual repression” (70), and also “Brett represents the principle of female eros” (70).

While Martin emphasizes the sexual role of the new woman, her argument raises an interesting new question: Could Brett be a woman with a late Victorian (1890-1910) attitude? In the novel, Mike Campbell, Brett’s fiancé who stays with her in Paris waiting for a divorce of Brett, tells Jake Barnes that Brett was married to an Aristocrat who inherited the “Ninth baronet” (SAR 207). Although she was already living with her fiancé Mike, she also has her title guaranteed by the British aristocracy. It is clear from the narrative that Brett never worked besides being a nurse in a hospital during World War I, and was always supported by rich aristocrats, who Brett never, even implicitly, denied their existence. From a point of view, Brett was a product of patriarchy. However, Martin’s theory of new woman observes that, “Brett’s loose, disordered relationships reflect the shattered unity and contradictions of the modern world. On one hand, she is insouciant, careless, a femme fatale—a

woman dangerous to men; and the other, she reflexively lapses into the role of redemptive woman by trying to save men through her sexuality” (69). If anything, Martin’s view represents the dichotomous sides of female sexuality in late Victorian times, domestic wife and *femme fatale*, rather than women in the “modern world.”

We should perhaps give a general overview of these multi-faceted Victorian characteristics. On one hand, according to Martha Vicinus, one of the authorities of Victorian studies, the Victorian era had an ideal femininity called the “perfect lady” (ix) which was essentially an upper class ideal. While the middle class wives worked at home and the working class were on very low wages and lived in ravaged houses, “this ideal was admired by many members of the working class” (xii) as well as by the middle class. The upper class had servants and governesses, who fulfilled a number of vital family tasks. The upper class woman only stayed amongst family and close friends, and most importantly, did not work, which made the Victorian woman “totally dependent on the economic position of her father and then her husband” (ix). For the Victorian woman, the only choice was to either become a wife, a governess, a mistress, a seamstress, or a prostitute. For a married woman, divorce was not an option and only meant unemployment. Unless divorced Victorian woman found a position as a governess, she had no other choice but “prostitution, which even the respectable might be forced into” (xii). Even those who became wives in the upper class and those who were actually the perfect ladies, were only a property whose “sole function was marriage and procreation” (x). Still, being the ideal perfect lady was the only solution for many.

On the other hand, the Victorian era had one other role for women, that of the *femme-fatale*. The French post-structuralist philosopher Michel Foucault uncovered the sexuality of the Victorian era, noting that it was a time when illegitimate sexuality proliferated through organized prostitution with legitimate reasoning. E.M. Sigsworth and T.J. Wyke who researched Victorian prostitution and venereal diseases explain that when a wife was proved “sexually inadequate and unsatisfying to her husband,” and when the “middle class began deferring marriage” (85), the demand for sexual enticement was no longer a matter of question. During this time, the image of the *femme-fatale* was commonly linked with prostitution, and the image was consumed heavily and made prominent via the portraiture of erotic icons of *fin-de-siècle* arts. From the end of Victorian era to Edwardian era (roughly between 1890-1914) while Victorian influences were still very strong, the goddess Circe, from

Homer's *Odyssey*, an icon of the enchantress, nymph, and sorceress of Greek mythology was revived through John William Waterhouse's famous painting *Circe* (1911)¹⁹ and became prevalent. Although this painting appeared in the Edwardian era after Victorian era, it represented the strong influence of Victorian culture of the time. The femme-fatale in the Victorian age can be understood as a rendition of Circe who dominates men sexually with beauty and eros.

The two faces of the Victorian age "wife/femme-fatale" seem to be in agreement with Brett's dichotomous sexuality as analyzed by Martin. Vicinus also writes, "the women and men in late nineteenth century were never so Victorian . . . within the context of stern Victorian sexual mores" (xv). This view also tells us that Brett's sexual liberation was nothing special about the new woman era as it began in the late Victorian age. Although Martin views that "Brett represents the principle of female eros unbounded by patriarchal control" (70), this eros was the case even in the late Victorian age. Further linking Brett to late Victorian age is the fact that in *SAR*, Brett is depicted with conspicuous beauty and a Circean nymph image. In the novel, Brett's fiancé Mike Campbell calls her a "Circe" who "turns men into swine" (*SAR* 148). Since Brett was dependent on men and had female eros equivalent to that of the Victorian female, as defined by Martin, we can also argue that Brett's dichotomous nature is very much a Victorian idea, when seen through the prism of sexuality.

Although Brett's shared traits with the late Victorian's are obvious, we must also not ignore the hidden features of the new woman. With the height of England's capitalism and shortfall of male workers due to wars, middle class women began acquiring working positions, which meant they began associating in new spheres. While "horses, bikes, automobiles" became major tools for transportation in the late Victorian age,²⁰ "new women were on the move" (Wintle 66). People began to wear practical clothes called "rational dress," a more athletic fashion than the previously fashionable long dresses.²¹ Sarah Wintle, a scholar of Victorian studies, remarks that the so-called new woman who appeared at the end of late Victorian era had new mobility in different spheres with appropriate garments which matched their mobility; this worked in contrast to the earlier Victorian women confined both in secluded domestic spaces as well as by the impractical and modest fashions of the time. Angelique Richardson and Chris Willis, scholars of Victorian literature and culture, explain that "smoking, rational dress and bicycling provided cartoonists and satirists with easy targets and such powerful visual iconography of the New

Woman became firmly established as a cultural stereotype” (13). This phenomenon exemplifies that the new women who were transgressing into men’s societal space were deemed highly threatening to society. The cartoonist and satirist’s attitudes towards these woman reveal their fear that the new women would overturn the traditionally standardized social-spatial divisions set by the patriarchy.

We must ask whether Brett had any part of the new woman’s mobility. In *SAR*, Brett did not ride a horse or bike, nor did she drive. Rather, she had a very Victorian way of getting around, a horse-drawn carriage with a chaperon by her side. In fact she was very Victorian in the way she physically moved. Brett was always in a cab while she moved around the Paris streets, having someone drive the car. In the novel, during two times Jake and Brett take a cab, it is always Jake who asks “want to go for a ride?” (*SAR* 250). Additionally, Brett was never alone in the cab or in transportation: she always had a chaperon with her who would pay the bill. When comparing this with new mobility of the New Woman, it is difficult to think that Brett was transgressing the men’s sphere. Brett does not work or commute or visit men’s offices, or visit such sites alone. When Jake asks Brett to “come in at the office,” she replies “hardly” (*SAR* 36), without hesitation and instead suggests to meet at the Hotel Crillon. Although Martin stresses that Brett had “stepped off the pedestal” and “enter[ed] the public sphere without apology” bravely visiting places within the men’s spheres such as “the bar and the bullfight” (Martin 68), Brett in fact was never alone. The bars and cafés where Brett smoked and drank were previously considered to be men’s social space, however, the Brett narrative always unfolds with the men still escorting her. When Martin mentions that “when Brett appears with bare shoulders in Montoya’s bar in Pamplona, she deeply offends him” (Martin 69), Martin is suggesting that the hotel owner Montoya was furious about Brett’s presence in the men’s sphere, implying that Brett was transgressing men’s spatial privilege. However, it is clear that this interpretation is not the case. Montoya is offended not because Brett was in his bar with her shoulders bare, but because Jake had betrayed Montoya who believed Jake through his passion toward bullfighting by pimping Montoya’s boy Pedro Romero, the nineteen-years-old bullfighter, to Brett. Jake had just turned down the invitation Pedro received from the American ambassador to keep Pedro away from the people “who don’t know what he’s worth” (*SAR* 176), just before this scene took place. In addition, Brett did not transgress Montoya’s *aficionado* men’s club, not only because she was brought there by

men, but also because it was Jake, the pimp for Brett, who transgressed Montoya's passionate sphere of *aficionado*.

Moreover, Brett's fashion does not seem in accordance with the new woman's. Brett does not wear trousers underneath her skirt like the athletic and mobile new woman, nor does she wear any type of mobile-suits. Nor is she described like the Gibson girl²² whose style was very close to a Victorian style with long skirts and long hair that prevailed in the U.S. from the 1890's to the 1910's. One description of Jake toward Brett reads, "Brett was damn good-looking. 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" (SAR 30). Through the eyes of Jake, we learn that Brett's fashion was neither that of a new woman nor a late Victorian lady nor a Gibson girl, but rather something closer to the popular flapper fashion of the 1920s. Kelly Sagert, a specialist on flapper studies, writes:

Labeled as the Roaring Twenties, the Jazz Age, and the Boom Era, this decade witnessed a whirlwind of social change, especially for women. For the first time ever, a significant percentage of young women embraced the flapper lifestyle, which included dresses cut up to their knees; shiny hair bobbed to their chins; and impudent slang, as they indulged in drinking, smoking, and petting. (Sagert vi)

Sagert defines the term "flapper" as a mainstream style that prevailed among the young women in the 1920s that came hand-in-hand with the social changes. If Brett was "damn good-looking" in 1924 or in 1925²³ in Paris, it is probable that she was considered to be en vogue, meaning a flapper. There are many other indications of her flapper style littered throughout the text. Jake informs us that her "hair was brushed back like a boy" (SAR 30), which indicates that she had "shiny bobbed hair" (Sagert vi) a prominent feature of a flapper style who usually had their hair "chopped to chin length" (Sagert 3). Secondly, the "wool jersey" Brett wears is a epitome of the 1920s' fashion motivated by Gabrielle "Coco" Chanel, a female fashion designer and leader in the 1920s. Pauline W. Thomas, a fashion researcher, mentions that "[Coco Chanel] promoted styles we associate with flappers. She worked . . . in soft fluid jersey fabrics cut with simple shapes that did not require corsetry or waist definition" (Thomas). When we identify Jake's description of Brett within the

1920s fashion, it becomes evident that Brett can be defined as a flapper.

However, since identifying Brett as flapper only suggests she was one of the mainstream women of that era, we need to look deeper into Jake's words to identify more deeply how much a flapper Brett was. When Jake says, "she wore a slipover jersey sweater and a tweed skirt, and her hair was brushed back like a boy's. She *started all that*" (SAR 30: emphasis mine), what is he implying about Brett? Does "all that" suggest the fashion of late Victorians or the new woman or the flapper? From history, we can ascertain that Brett was not wearing a late Victorian outfit, nor was she dressed as a Gibson girl. According to Sally Ledger, a scholar the new woman, says, "the new woman was very much a fin-de-siècle phenomenon" and their figures were "utterly central to the literary culture of the fin-de-siècle years" (1). With Ledger's view that the new woman was a product of the fin-de-siècle years, we can also surmise that it would have been impossible for Brett to have "started all that" when "[Brett] is thirty-four now" (SAR 46) in the year of 1924 or 1925. Brett could have not "started all [new woman's fashion]" as she is too young. It was about a quarter century later from those fin-de-siècle years that the flapper "slipover jersey" emerged. Jake's gaze tells us Brett's skirt was short. When Jake and Bill walk to Café Select to see Mike and Brett, Jake finds Brett "sitting on a high stool, her legs crossed. She had no stockings on" (SAR 84), which tells us even more about Brett's style. Since it has been said that "between 1920 and 1924 skirts remained calf length" (Thomas), and from "1926 to 1928, the knees themselves were exposed" (Sagert 2), it is probable to assume that Brett's skirt was much closer to knees length. With calf length, it is highly probable that one can only see the ankles or calves crossed and not the "legs crossed" (SAR 84) as Jake saw them. Also, if we return to the issue of Brett's hairstyle, the same logic stands. If new woman was a fin-de-siècle phenomenon, how could she "start all that" bob hair of flapper when she was ten-years-old (while Brett is now thirty four years old in 1924 or 1925)? As long as we trust Jake's gaze, the fashion that Brett "started" would be the fashion of flapper.

While it's clear that Jake is seeing Brett as flapper, is this the only message Jake is sending to the reader? Jake is telling us even more about Brett when he says "she was built with curves like the *hull of a racing yacht* and you missed none of it with the wool jersey" (SAR 30). One may argue that the "curves" Jake saw were a prominent feature of the Gibson girl who were known to boast "a curvy, hourglass figure" while "flappers bound their breasts, in radical contrast to the Gibson girl's curve" (Sagert 2). It is in fact true a Gibson girl emphasized

her body shape more than the a flapper did since flappers “did not require corsetry or waist definition” (Thomas) and “neglected to cinch their waists” (Sagert 2). However, when we pay closer attention to Jake’s words, he is not talking about the “S-curve” (Gourly 32) the silhouette of the Gibson girl which anyone dressed in a Gibson girl style would have, but instead telling us how the shape of Brett’s natural body could be seen even without clothing to enhance it. Jake’s observation tells us that Brett looked not only different from ordinary flappers, but also sexually appealing to him.

It is important not to overlook Jake’s metaphor of the “hull of a racing yacht” (SAR 30) as it provides us with new insight of how Brett was not only different from other flappers, but also how *new* she was in the way she looked. While flapper fashion brought a “garçon,” a boyish look deprived of the curves of the body, Jake sees a nautical silhouette as in “hull of a racing yacht” which makes Brett very different from ordinary flappers. Jennifer Craik, a scholar of fashion culture, gives us a new insight that “one of the first designers to appropriate naval references was Coco Chanel,” and that Chanel “used nautical motifs (boatnecks, gold buttons and braid, etc.)” (60). Since Chanel’s design had a nautical motif, we can go as far as to presume that Jake was implying Brett was wearing Chanel in the age of flapper. Why else would Jake even mention the “hull” and the “racing yacht”? Jake is telling us that Brett was wearing a nautically formed Chanel dress which one “missed none of [bodily shape].” We do have some other evidence that Brett was a Chanel wearer. When Jake sees Mike and Brett at a supper party at the hotel Montoya, he says, “Brett wore a black, sleeveless evening dress. She looked quite beautiful. Mike acted as though nothing had happened.” (SAR 150). Although Jake does not tell us the details, he is talking about “what remains a fashion staple in women’s wardrobes: the simple but elegant ‘little black dress’” (Drowne 101)²⁴ that is thought to have no sleeves introduced by Chanel in 1926. If Brett was wearing Chanel’s “little black dress” in 1924 or in 1925, it makes perfect sense when Jake says “she started [to wear] all that” (SAR 30: bracket mine) since no one was wearing Chanel’s groundbreaking outfit at then. Only friends and people at the salon would have access to clothes yet introduced to the fashion market, just like Hemingway had access to unpublished materials from the salon of Gertrude Stein, who Hemingway learned his modernist artistry during his Paris years. Being a Lady in Paris, it might not be altogether so erroneous to assume that Jake is implying that Brett was even an acquaintance with Chanel, though we will need another research for such matter. Jake’s remark on Mike’s

attitude makes this point convincing. Mike is not surprised to see the black dress Brett wears because as an aristocrat, he will be exposed to and unfazed by the latest fashion, even if they are cutting edge. Through the metaphor of the “black dress,” Jake makes a sharp distinction between an ordinary flapper and Brett. Jake sees Brett as flapper, however, he also see her as “damn good looking” (SAR 30), and “quite beautiful” (SAR 150). He wants to emphasize not just how good looking she is but that her affinity for Chanel put her at the height of Parisian fashion in the 1920s. Judging by fashion, it becomes difficult to link Brett with the new woman.

Taking a closer look at Brett with relation to the new woman movement, Brett is a lady of British aristocracy who would not find any interest in overturning patriarchy, though she is not afraid to throw away her social status for something more important to her. For Brett, men must be strong and financially supportive, and must be willing to let her be the way she is, just like Mike Campbell or Count Mippopolous, the Greek aristocrat who offered Brett “ten thousand dollars to go to Biarritz with him” (SAR 41). Although Brett did not choose to do so, we must not overlook the importance how Brett was not against such an idea. In fact, seeing that the Count had experienced many wars, Brett favors his value-system and asks Jake to like him as well. “He’s one of us” (SAR 40), Brett says. Jake’s observations help us see that Brett’s choices and fashion do not meet the characteristics of a new woman. That said, we must admit that while Brett can still be seen as late Victorian in some ways, we must not ignore the contradicting point that Brett is waiting for a divorce to get married to her new fiancé Mike Campbell. In the Victorian era, divorce would have been a fatal decision for her. However, we must also not forget that Brett is not trying to become independent by divorce but rather dependent again by marrying Mike, a decision that makes her unqualified for definition as a new woman who traditionally seek independence.

If anything, it is highly plausible that Brett had nothing to do with the new woman’s movement. In addition, it is difficult to prove that she is interested in supporting such an idea. In attitude, like in dress, she is closer to a flapper, while also holding onto some late Victorian values that equate to patriarchal values. In the end, we must again briefly ask why Brett was so insistently identified as a new woman by Martin. Ledger views that the new woman was not only a “fin-de-siècle phenomenon” (1) but also a largely “discursive phenomenon” (Ledger 3) of the literary culture of the era, meaning, the new woman was a feminist’s experiment toward the women’s movement. She

maintains that the “new women at the fin de siècle are as significant historically as the day-to-day lived experience of the feminists of the late Victorian women’s movement” (3). Looking back, we can perhaps see Martin’s argument as a part of an experiment of women’s movement in claiming Brett is a new woman.

Having ignored many of Brett’s traits, we thus realize that the critics have unintentionally fabricated her character into that of a “new woman” for some sort of political agendas. It is clear that the *deus ex machina* was only an ad hoc solution aimed to construct a historical truth to soothe gender and political problems. Thus, Brett was never herself in the hands of the critical argument. Through critical reception, she was abducted outside the novel and exploited as a battlefield for the proxy-war of gender and minority rights. Now, we certainly know that Brett was not a new woman, but was merely a character who lived during that historical period.

VIII. Concluding Remarks

It is clear that Brett Ashley has been largely misunderstood throughout her history of critical reception. Although Martin defined Brett as a new woman, Hemingway’s artistry was always revealing how readers cannot employ a *deus ex machina* and attempt to confine or stabilize Brett other than the character herself in the novel. Even when she is defined as a special flapper, there are always traits that overturn such understanding. Hence, we are unable to assign or determine an essential role to Brett other than she is in the novel. Through this study, it has also become clear that reading texts through political agendas may serve needs for certain people, however, it deprives the nature of the character. As Nagel once said, “*The Sun Also Rises* is much more a novel of a character than of event, and the action would seem empty were it not for the rich texture of personalities that interact through the book” (90). It could be said that reading SAR is about reading the complex characters interact in dialogues that constantly produce multi-dimensional inconsistencies and ambiguities promoted by the Hemingway’s artistry. This enables Brett to eternally escape definition. Should we still call her a new woman?

Notes

¹ The term “ad feminam,” is defined as “appealing to irrelevant personal considerations concerning woman, especially prejudices against them” (“ad hominam”).

² The term “ad hominem” is defined as “appealing to personal considerations rather than to logic or reason” (“ad hominem”).

³ Cf. Phillip Young, and Charles W. Mann, 31-32. By “original,” Fitzgerald meant Duff Twysden, the alleged real life model of the fictive Brett Ashley.

⁴ Cf. Baker, 219-20, and also Saranson, 228-40. Duff Twysden’s real name is Lady Duff Twysden, and has been said to be the symbol of the Lost Generation. She was a British socialite born in 1893, six years older than Hemingway, and was in escapade in Paris with her cousin and lover Pat Guthrie away from the allegedly violent husband Sir Roger Thomas Twysden, a naval officer who inherited the ninth baronet. Hemingway met Duff in Montparnasse, and it has been said that Hemingway fell in love with Duff while Duff did not, because she was not willing to betray Hadley, Hemingway’s first wife who had a one-year-old son Bumby.

⁵ Cf. Beegel, 276.

⁶ Phillip Young defines that Hemingway’s code “is made out of the controls of honor and courage which in a life of tension and pain make a man a man and distinguish him from the people who follow random impulses” (Young, *Ernest* 63)

⁷ Second wave biographies are ones that were published after 1975 when the National Archives in Massachusetts publicly opened Hemingway manuscripts to the public. In contrast, examples for the first wave biographies are Carlos Baker’s *Hemingway: The Writer as Artist* (1952) and *Ernest Hemingway: A Life Story* (1969), Phillip Young’s *Ernest Hemingway, A Reconsideration* (1952), and Charles Fenton’s *The Apprenticeship of Ernest Hemingway* (1954).

⁸ Cf. Beegel, 281. I use the term “Hemingway industry” as employed by S. Beegel.

⁹ Susan Beegel explains that “the number of women scholars at work on Hemingway rose from 7 percent of the whole in the 1960s to 13 percent in the 1970s” (Beegel 282).

¹⁰ Cf. Beegel, 282-85.

¹¹ Jamie Barlowe further explains that “when women’s scholarship has been cited or mentioned in a mainstream essay or book, usually briefly, one or two women have been tokenized to speak for all women’s scholarship, or their work has often been refuted or trivialized” (Barlow 24).

¹² According to Baribieri and Twite, the New Right offered Ronald Reagan for president in 1980. They won presidency by the strong backup from the evangelical Christian denominations who “took conservative stands on social and economic issues.” When the television became a powerful tool, they successfully rallied by

spreading the gospel of conservatism through “televangelists,” and began opposing “women’s liberation, abortion, gay rights, and many of the Great Society programs.” They revived the “cut-throat capitalism” of the past and made entrepreneurs heroes, regardless of their business, religious, scandals. Their moral had always been in controversy. (Baribieri and Twite “A New Conservative Majority”)

¹³ Cf. Beegel, 286.

¹⁴ Cf. Oliver, 477-79. Mary Welsh Monks Hemingway was born April 5th, 1908, in Minnesota, and died November 26th, 1986 in New York City. Hemingway married Mary in Havana in 1946, when he was at the age of forty-seven. She published her biography of Ernest *How It was* in 1976.

¹⁵ Although Wylder defines Brett as a new woman, he also writes, “it is true that, in the role of new woman, Brett does not understand herself very well. But the same can be said for the rebellious males” (Wylder 93).

¹⁶ “Deus ex machina” is defined as “an unexpected, artificial, or improbable character, device, or event introduced suddenly in a work of fiction or drama to resolve a situation or untangle a plot” (“deus ex machina”).

¹⁷ Although Reynolds gave a piercing remark on the applicability of new woman on Brett, the definition he brought for “new woman” did not exemplify strongly why Brett is not a new woman. He defines two types of new woman: “the educated professional woman who was active in formerly all-male areas and the stylish uninhibited young woman who drank and smoked in public, devalued sexual innocence, married but did not want children, and considered divorce no social stigma” (58). Brett is certainly not the first type of new woman since she had no occupation. It is plausible that critics did not find Reynolds’ claim highly convincing although it makes sense when he sees Brett as “rather, Hemingway’s sophisticated version of the screen vamp” (59).

¹⁸ Cf. Foucault, 4.

¹⁹ Cf. John William Waterhouse.

²⁰ Cf. Wintle, 66-93.

²¹ Cf. “Victorian dress reform.” The Rational Dress Society organized in 1881 in London, had resisted against wearing tightly-fitting corsets, high heels, heavily weighted skirts, garments that make healthy exercise impossible, and demanded that women dress healthily, comfortably, and beautifully through new fashion.

²² Cf. Sagert 2. “Gibson girl” is an idealized American girl of the 1890s as pictured by Charles Dana Gibson (1867-1944). Although it is widely known that Gibson girl was a phenomenon of the 1890’s, however, Sagert explains that “during most of the 1910’s, the feminine ideal in the United States was the Gibson girl,” an image made the Charles Dana Gibson (1867-1944).

²³ Cf. Reynolds, *The Sun* 86-88. Michael Reynolds confirms that the action of *The Sun Also Rises* took place in 1924 or 1925.

²⁴ Cf. Drowne, 101. Often termed as “LBD,” the little black dress first appeared in *Vogue* in 1926. LBD is often sleeveless and often has a low cut in the back.

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