Men and Women - The performance of gender in *A Farewell to Arms* and *The Sun Also Rises* by Ernest Hemingway

Anna Hage
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Supervisor: Irina Rasmussen
Abstract

The purpose of this essay is to study and analyze how Hemingway portrays gender roles in his two novels *The Sun Also Rises* and *A Farewell to Arms*. This analysis is done by using the theoretical tools developed by Judith Butler’s theory of performativity and Michelle Lazar’s conceptualization of feminist critical discourse analysis. Butler’s theory of performativity is used to critically evaluate what the main protagonists of the two novels do and how they act, while Lazar’s feminist critical discourse analysis is used to analyze conversations and verbal interactions between the characters in the two books.

Hemingway’s narratives describe the characters’ problematic relationship to traditional gender roles. Hemingway himself, sometimes described as a “he-man” of the lost generation, was complicit with marketing himself as a tough male and created masculine characters with a strong masculine persona. But, as this thesis shows, the male protagonists created by Hemingway are men who also have softer and more feminine coded sides. This analysis shows further that the women of Hemingway’s novels are both women conforming to gender roles, expected from them during this time, but also women with their own agency. By creating this nuanced picture of gender, Hemingway created a complex idea of gender, and unsettled the fixed notion for it. This essay focuses on Brett Ashley and Jake Barnes in *The Sun Also Rises* and Catherine Barkley and Fredric Henry in *A Farewell to Arms* and how they tacitly revise their gender roles through certain acts and how they speak in relation to each other and other characters in Hemingway’s two novels.

This comparative analysis of the male and female characters in the two of Hemingway’s seminal novels demonstrates that gender norms in Hemingway are both affirmed and challenged by rendering them problematic. All four characters analyzed throughout this essay proved to both carry traits traditionally given to them, but also having behaviors more typically being given to the other gender.

**Keywords:** Gender studies; Ernest Hemingway; Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis; masculinity; femininity; *The Sun Also Rises; A Farewell to Arm*
A soldier, a heavy drinker, a smoker, and a writer. Ernest Hemingway can in many ways be perceived as a very stereotypical man. It therefore comes as no surprise to find that his writing can be seen as mirroring him. Hemingway was to the public presented as a sort of “he-man” persona, glorifying the masculinity of fighting and drinking (Strychacz 3). However, a softer and more sensitive side to him is also hiding under the hyper-masculine identity. Hemingway’s portrayal of love and heartbreak found in his novel is also found in A Moveable Feast (1964), his memoirs regarding his time in Paris as a young writer. “Nobody climbs on skis now and almost everybody breaks their legs but maybe it is easier in the end to break your legs than to break your heart although they say that everything breaks now and that sometimes, afterwards, many are stronger at the broken places.” (Hemingway 1964, 220)

The men in Hemingway’s novel perform many of the traits detected in him and his life. They drink, they fight wars, they smoke, and they write, but they also exhibit the sensitive sides of Hemingway found in the novels and his memoirs, which may just not be as visible to the naked eye. They cry, they experience heartbreak, they pray to god to let the person they love live.

The same way Hemingway’s men may appear to be hyper-masculine at first, the women Hemingway describes in his novels may appear as very feminine at first, but by studying them closely it becomes apparent that the femininity performed is far more nuanced. Hemingway’s women are women with their own agency, they drink (sometimes even more than the men surrounding them), refuse to change their appearance or acts for men and do what they want.

This essay aims to explore the non-conformativity of femininity and masculinity presented in the novels The Sun Also Rises and A Farewell to Arms through the main characters, to study what they say and how they act and how they perform their genders in relation to each other, their surroundings and the people around them.

Published in 1926, The Sun Also Rises follows American and British expats on their trip to the bullfights in Pamplona, Spain. The story revolves around Jake Barnes, an American writer who was injured in the war and due to this war injury cannot perform sexually. The story also revolves around Lady Brett Ashley, two-time divorcée and love interest of Jake Barnes. Jake and Brett and their friends are in the story followed as they visit the bullfights, drink, fight and love in Paris and Pamplona.

Hemingway’s novel A Farewell To Arms (1929) tells the reader a story of war and of the men and women caught in the war. Hemingway’s protagonist, Fredric Henry is serving for
the Italian army and the story follows Fredric, his brothers in war and him falling in love with V.A.D Catherine Barkley.

In this essay, I suggest reading these two novels comparatively to explore their similarities and also consider their differences. I will argue that the comparison demonstrates how Hemingway consistently unsettles the notion of fixed identities by having protagonist who both confirm and disconfirm to established gendered norms of their time. Both stories contain a masculine protagonist who has either been in a war or is currently in one, two men who do carry out a lot of masculine traits but also do not conform to their assigned gender norms. Both men are in love with our female protagonists, two women who have both worked as V.A.D’s during the war, carrying out a lot of feminine traits but also portrayed as women with their own agency. However, the books are also different from one another on a majority of levels. The setting is different, the love stories are different, and the main characters are different, their compatible sides aside. The Sun Also Rises and A Farewell to Arms are two novels suitable to be compared however since they put side by side give a nuanced image of the gender roles presented.

I intend to use Feminist literary criticism to critically evaluate and study The Sun Also Rises and A Farewell to Arms and the gender roles explored in the two novels. Feminist theory will be used as a theoretical framework for the essay.

Both The Sun Also Rises and A Farewell To Arms can be read by placing them within the modernistic era and then placed in its historical context. The era of modernism was a time of major social changes, making a historical reading of the novels an interesting point of view. However, since the focus of this essay is shaped by gender studies, I aim to explore gender roles and performance of gender in terms of their theoretical implications for our understanding of the gender politics of the novels.

Feminist literary criticism aims to question the way gender is represented and argues that literary history has been dominated by a patriarchal authority (Selden 141-42). According to Feminist literary criticism characterization in literary works goes beyond just sexist attitudes. For example, stereotypes of men and women are frequently used in literary texts, and central characters in literature, both men and women are mostly seen through the eyes of men, that is, not only male writers but also male characters (Selden 142). Feminist literary criticism is suitable for this essay since what is being explored and analyzed throughout the essay is gender roles, if they are stereotypical and the relationship between masculine and feminine. The perspective of women, as presented through the eyes of men will also play an
important part in these analyses since both books are both narrated by men and written by a man.

Judith Butler’s theory of performativity presented in her seminal work *Gender Trouble* will be used to analyze the main characters of the novels and how they perform their gender. Butler argues that gender is created by a repetition of acts that are culturally constituted (Selden et al. 216). This would also mean that femininity and masculinity are varied regarding culture, instead of fixed (Selden et al. 216). In *Gender Trouble* first published in 1990, Butler argues that: “Discrete genders are part of what ‘humanizes’ individuals within contemporary culture; indeed, we regularly punish those who fail to do their gender right” (190). Butler also argues in her book *Undoing Gender*, published in 2004 that “Gender is the mechanism by which notions of masculine and feminine are produced and naturalized, but gender might very well be the apparatus by which such terms are deconstructed and denaturalized” (42). Butler’s arguments regarding gender and the unsettled notion of gender will be used in this essay in order to show how Hemingway’s unsettling of gender can be seen in the novels’ protagonists.

Both *The Sun Also Rises* and *A Farewell to Arms* are written from the perspective of the male protagonists: Jake Barnes (*The Sun Also Rises*) and Fredric Henry (*A Farewell to Arms*). This means that reader has no other way of understanding the agency of the female protagonist Brett Ashley and Catherine Barkley through the way they act since the only portrayal the reader has of them is through the eyes of the man telling the story. However, Hemingway’s quite extensive use of conversation in both novels makes it possible to detect the agency of Brett Ashley and Catherine Barkley. The conversations where both female protagonists are involved is our only evidence of their own agency. Therefore, only using Butler’s theory of performativity would make it quite difficult to understand and analyze the agency of Brett Ashley and Catherine Barkley. In order to analyze the speech and conversations carried out in both the novels, Feminist critical discourse analysis will be used.

Feminist critical discourse analysis aims to analyze and theorize gender and gender oppression from a critical feminist perspective in order to highlight how gender works (Lazar 3). Feminist critical discourse analysis is in general mostly used in the field of linguistics to study language and how language works (Lazar 2). Lazar does, however, argue that Feminist critical discourse analysis is just as suitable to analyze the written text as spoken one (5) and since both novels contain a quite heavy amount of conversation it is a suitable method to use, mostly in order to access and map the agency and ideas of the two female protagonists. While studying the two novels using Butler’s theory of performativity and Feminist critical discourse analysis, I will be looking at different characteristics typically described in western
society as feminine or masculine. I will study how these characteristics are seen in Brett, Jake, Catherine, and Fredric through their behavior and what they say in conversation. The characteristics used are described in Paul Baker’s book *Sexed Texts*. The characteristics for typical masculine behavior identified in Baker’s study are: assertive, aggressive, logical, pragmatic, competitive and not expressing emotion. The characteristics typically given to women are: passive, caring, sentimental and emotional (Baker 4).

Butler’s theory of performativity will be useful for this essay due to its focus on gender performativity and acts. Combined with feminist critical discourse analysis which will focus on the conversations between characters, Butler’s concept of gender performativity will help with creating a nuanced picture of the performance of gender represented by the protagonists of the books Brett Ashley, Jake Barnes, Fredric Henry, and Catherine Barkley.

**Femininity**

The two female protagonists in the stories, Brett Ashley and Catherine Barkley can be presented as portraying two different sides of femininity, both in terms of contrasts and similarities, considering that with one another they are both women born and raised in the same time era. Brett has by critics been described as “the new woman” (Martin 50). She is described as being free from sexual stigma and ending her romantic affairs when the men she is involved with try to claim any kind of possession over her (Martin 50-51). Catherine Barkley has on the other hand been described as a prime example of Hemingway’s misogyny (Traber 28). However, Daniel Traber argues in his article that Catherine instead should be read as someone with agency and as a woman trying to find meaning in a war situation (29).

But perhaps Brett Ashley and Catherine Barkley are not so different after all. I would argue that Catherine is not allowed to move out of her gender stereotype and the gender she is performing as much as Brett is. It is important to acknowledge the venue the two female protagonists are placed in. Catherine is as mentioned above placed in a war situation working as a V.A.D while Brett is living a single expat life in Paris. I would also argue that what Catherine and Brett are representing while positioned next to each other are two ways for women to perform their gender during their time. Brett can be read as the more radical woman revolutionizing the traditional structure set out for women during her time (Martin 50). Catherine would then be read as her opposite in relation to her gendered behavior, performing a more traditional feminine role that historically has been given to women. Although, Catherine mentions becoming a new woman towards the final chapters of *A Farewell to Arms*, stating that “I’m going to cut it [her hair] and then I’ll be a fine new and
different girl for you" (AFTA 270) However, an emphasis here should be on the “for you”, meaning that Catherine wants to be different for Fredric, while Brett refuses to grow her hair out for someone. As Brett puts it, Romero “wanted me to grow my hair out. Me, with long hair.” (TSAR 212). While Catherine wants to make this change for Fredric, Brett refuses to make this change for her lover, and perhaps a conclusion can be made the while Catherine is stuck in performing older traditional roles, Brett has completely adopted the new roles for her gender performance, where she will not change her appearance due to men’s opinion about her. While I would argue that Catherine at least appearance-wise has adapted to what is expected of her, showing that she is aware of how she should perform her gender, Brett instead wants to completely distance herself from the expected performance of her gender (Moddelmog 157).

The difference of their performance of femininity is however not only described in relation to the two female protagonists’ appearance and opinions regarding their appearances. It is also apparent when observing both Brett and Catherine’s behavior in relation to sexuality. After hers and Frederic’s intimate encounter, Catherine confides: “‘I never felt like a whore before.’ [...] ‘I know it darling. But it isn’t nice to feel like one’” (AFTA 137) Catherine’s explanation suggests that she attempts to perform her femininity, but she does not enjoy the feeling. But perhaps it is an all too simple analysis to state that this is due to the pre-marital sex. She is referring to the whole situation, feeling like a “whore” since their encounter takes place in a battered hotel room. Being involved in pre-marital sex in battered hotel rooms may be the kind of femininity that Catherine has been taught to not perform, and she might be aware that women doing this will be shamed for it. This feminine ideal and Catherine’s idea of pre-marital sex being inappropriate also appears earlier in the novel, during her first meeting with Fredric Henry, when she refers to her past love: “‘I didn’t know about anything then’” (AFTA 18). According to Traber, Catherine indicates that she was never involved in sexual intercourse with her now deceased fiancé (31). Traber continues the argument by stating that this might be an ideal that Catherine was brought up with (31). However, since she clearly later on in the novel is involved with Fredric in different ways, this is an ideal that changed. Considering the way Catherine states that she wants to cut her hair, a conclusion regarding Catherine’s performance of femininity can be drawn- that she is a woman whose outlook on her individuality and her place in the world is changing.

On the other side of the spectrum, Brett is throughout The Sun Also Rises indicated to be involved in affairs with multiple men, most memorable being her sleeping with Robert Cohn since she feels sorry for him (Martin 51). Her affair with Romero is also an indication
of her more relaxed view on sex and romantic affairs. Baker states that aggressiveness and assertiveness are usually stated as masculine traits. However, regarding sexual relations, Brett does exhibit these exact traits, perhaps best pictured in a discussion between Jake and Brett while observing Romero fighting bulls:

“’This next is his last one’
‘Not really’” (TSAR 146).

As Brett watches Romero fight the bulls in the arena, she cannot take her eyes off him. Her statement of “Not really” after Jake mentions how the bull Romero is fighting is his last one is filled with assertiveness and perhaps even aggression. Brett does not merely state that Romero will fight another bull that day, she states that Romero will be her next bull and conquest (Nagel 97). Brett’s assertiveness regarding Romero and how he will be her next conquest stands in clear contrast to Catherine’s feeling like a whore after her sexual intercourse with Fredric.

In one way, Catherine and Brett represent two parts of Freud’s “Madonna-Whore complex”, Catherine portraying the Madonna-like femininity where love is important and Brett portraying more of the whore. However, it may not be that simple. The Madonna-whore complex states that some men are only able to see women who are regarded as whores as just that, but in the case of Brett there are men who want to marry her, and it is she who for different reasons does not want them.

Butler argues that when someone acts non-confirmative in relation to their assigned gender this person will be shamed for that behavior. In A Farewell to Arms, a performance of gender in relation to sex can be detected, both in Catherine’s comment regarding feeling like a “whore” after being involved in sexual intercourse with Fredric in the hotel room, but also by Fergy’s reaction to understanding Catherine is pregnant with Fredric’s child: “I’m ashamed of you, Catherine Barkley. You have no shame and no honor and you’re as sneaky as it is’” (AFTA 220) Fergy’s reaction does not only state her mindset regarding Catherine’s pregnancy and relationship with Fredric, but also implies that perhaps Catherine is not performing her gender the way cultural norms in this specific scene sets out that she should. The punishment Catherine receives for not performing in what is set out as the appropriate way is being told she does not have any honor, indicating that Catherine’s performance at the moment is not the one of a “good woman” but perhaps the complete opposite in Fergy’s eyes.
Masculinity

The setting of *A Farewell to Arms*, right in the middle of an ongoing war makes the story an excellent place for an analysis regarding masculinity. The novel and its placement within the war have according to Strychacz “often been read as a testing ground for the true nature of men” (11). However, as Strychacz continues his argument, Fredric’s performance of gender has been argued to question the truth and naturalness of masculinity (11). Therefore, Fredric’s performance of masculinity and the different masquerades that Fredric is said to perform in the novel suggests a more nuanced picture of the masculinity performance portrayed by Hemingway in *A Farewell to Arms*. The same war scenario is not as present in *The Sun Also Rises*. However, Jake Barnes involvement in the war is crucial to the story and his relationship with Brett Ashley, the war is the reason he first met her, and in my opinion, most important since it is the reason why they will never be able to be together.

In *The Sun Also Rises*, another masculine arena is however constantly present, the bullfights. In both novels, the male protagonists define themselves and their masculinity in relation to men and women, but also women who almost work in a subduing way in relation to the masculine performance. Hemingway’s love for demonstrating masculinity can be seen in both novels through the setting of the war and the bullfights (Mann, 64).

Inwardly regretting the new state of his mind, when he thinks: “God knows I had not wanted to fall in love with her. I had not wanted to fall in love with any one. But God knows I had” (*AFTA* 85), Fredric for once, admits to himself that he feels something he can no longer cover up. He does explain to himself that he is in love, letting go of his previously masculine coded behavior of not showing or explaining his emotions. Fredric does throughout *A Farewell to Arms* fail to show emotion or cover it up as “a game” (which could be understood as only playing with emotions in order to get what he wants). Strychacz argues that this is all part of what he refers to as Fredric’s “masquerades” (91). The ideas of these masquerades correlate with Butler’s theory of performativity, with the common factor being that the masquerades exemplify the theory of performativity in referring to a performance of gender. What becomes apparent when juxtaposing the masculinity performed by both Fredric and Jake is that the performed masculinity appears to change in relation to women. Jake is hard and almost though when discussing things with other men, but with Brett, he is softer and even cries from just the thought of her. “I was thinking about Brett and my mind stopped jumping around and started to go in sort of smooth waves. Then all of a sudden I started to cry” (*TSAR* 27).
Performed masculinity is also portrayed in a quite physical way in both novels, through the use of phallic symbols. In *A Farewell to Arms*, the weapons and the men’s use of the weapons could both be viewed as symbolic of masculinity and its violence but also as a phallic symbol. However, the guns as phallic symbols are quite discreet and subtle in the novel, in comparison to Hemingway’s use of phallic symbols in *The Sun Also Rises*, especially present in the fishing scene between Bill and Jake. In the following scene, Bill and Jake are discussing the fishes they caught during their fishing trip:

‘How are yours?’
‘Smaller.’
‘Let’s see them.’
‘They are packed.’
‘How big are they really?’
‘They’re all about the size of your smallest’” *(TSAR 105).*

The conversation shows Jake, who has caught the smaller fishes as unwilling to show his, quite smaller fishes. In relation to the conversation that occurs between the two men a bit earlier, where Bill mentions the rumor that Jake is impotent, and Jake states he “just had an accident” *(TSAR 101)* the fishing conversation clearly has undertones of really being about something else – that is, not about how many fishes they have caught and how big these fishes are. As Strychacz argues, masculinity in *The Sun Also Rises* is very dependent on the legitimization and approval of an audience *(81).* I would agree with Strychacz and argue that this would explain why Jake will not show his fishes to Bill, since he knows they will be smaller, and he will by that lose some of that legitimation of being a man. If Jake is already struggling with masculine performance due to his impotence, the fishing situation could just be another situation when Jake becomes de-masculinized in front of this peer. Jake’s refusal of showing his fishes could also according to Strychacz be seen as him refusing to be a part of the game of who has the bigger fish since he knows that he will lose this game *(78).*

In relation to the conversation about Jake’s impotence it may also be so that Jake has already lost a big part of his performed masculinity against Bill, since Bill appears to be aware of the fact that Jake is impotent, and the idea that Jake would once again have to lose a part of his masculinity (that is, being the man who caught the biggest fish) to Bill. Bill has already won the contest between them by not only knowing about Jake’s impotence, but also for letting Jake know that he knows about it. Jake also seems to be aware of that this has
become a slight battle of masculinity. Not only is Bill “winning” this game of performed masculinity, but he also tells Jake how to act in order to properly perform his masculinity. Butler argues in *Gender Trouble* how people who do not perform their gender are punished and shamed for this so that they will start to perform their gender more according to the cultural norm. This is what Bill does to Jake in the impotence scene. “'Never mention that,' Bill said. ‘That’s the sort of thing that can’t be spoken of.’” (*TSAR* 101). Bill is aware of just how much out of the ordinary it is in regard to the masculinity norms that Jake cannot perform, and he is not reluctant to tell him how this can never be mentioned. Therefore, shaming Jake for his impotence become multifaceted. The shaming works in two ways, as cautionary advice and as a clear message that shames Jake into performing his masculinity in the way it is supposed to be performed culturally (in Jake’s case, never mentioning his impotence so no one will be aware of it).

It does however also work on a more personal level for Bill. By letting Jake know his performance is out of the ordinary, he also establishes that he himself follows this performativity norm set out for them. By establishing how he follows the performativity norm set out for them, and therefore pinpointing how Jake does not, Bill could also see this as another level of the masculinity battle that occurred regarding the fishes. Bill by both wanting to see Jake’s smaller fishes, commenting on his potential impotence and telling Jake how he does not follow the gender norm the way it was constructed point out to him how he himself, in fact, is more superior as a masculine character. James Puckett argues that masculinity for the men in Hemingway’s novels is constantly relying on the judgment of others (126). This is presented in the fishing scene, both by Bill establishing his masculinity by showing his bigger fishes but also by Jake’s refusal to show his fishes, since he knows they will be smaller and that he will lose perhaps even more parts of his masculinity that he still has left after losing his ability to perform sexually. However, Jake has one place left where he can rely on the judgement of others and be the one with the established masculinity; that is, his financial funds. Jake (and Romero) are the only men seen working in the novel (Puckett 140). What Jake lacks in sexual performance; he makes up for in financial funds. Jake lends money to friends, pays for drinks and tips waiters and is in that arena the one man with the established masculinity (Puckett 140).

While Jake’s masculinity appears to be based a lot on his impotence, inability to perform sexually and how he copes with this and attempts to perform his masculinity in other ways such as by visiting the bullfights, fighting and drinking, Fredric Henry’s masculinity may appear to rely quite a lot on his identity as a soldier and involvement in the ongoing war.
I would argue that Fredric’s status as a soldier is one of the most crucial parts of his different masquerades of masculinity. However, this soldier-based masculinity has many flaws. Fredric being injured could quite possibly be a major part of the masculinity masquerade, being injured while in battle and while fighting for Italy, his provisionally adopted country. But Fredric is injured “while we were eating cheese” (AFTA 59). I would argue that Fredric’s masculinity that could have been so much more established and stronger by the injury is instead in fact, injured. He does nothing brave to deserve the medal he might be given for his injury. He is not brave or heroic in any way (Reynolds 124). Here a similarity between the performed masculinity in both A Farewell to Arms and The Sun Also Rises is noticeable. Both our main protagonists have their masculinity injured by war injuries. Whether Jake Barnes is injured while in battle or not is never mentioned, meaning he could have been injured in a similar environment as Fredric or in a more “heroic” way. The importance is, however, that his injury leaves an extensive and permanent mark on his masculinity. Fredric Henry’s injury is smaller and may not leave such a big mark, but the fact that this injury did not occur while doing something heroic and instead happened while sitting down eating cheese might be what leaves the biggest mark on his masculinity.

** Relationship between masculinity and femininity **

Catherine and Brett perform their femininity in different ways throughout the novels; however, it is almost always in relation to the men around them. In A Farewell to Arms, Catherine’s femininity is performed in relation to Fredric but also the other women around her. Brett’s femininity is instead performed in relation to Jake and her other friends who travel with them to Pamplona; these friends are mostly men, except for a few women. However, I have not found many places in The Sun Also Rises where Brett Ashley actually interacts with other women, which is why the focus on Brett in relation to other people will be in her conversations with men.

As mentioned earlier in this essay, Fredric’s masculinity appears to be very based on him not showing emotions, something very present during the beginning of the novel when meeting Catherine for one of the first times:

> I turned her so I could see her face when I kissed her and I saw that her eyes were shut. I kissed both her shut eyes. I thought she was probably a little crazy. It was all right if she was. I did not care what I was getting into. This was better than going every evening to the house for officers where the girls climbed all over you and put your cap on backwards as a sign of affection between their
trips upstairs with brother officers. I knew I did not love Catherine Barkley nor had any idea of loving her. This was a game, like bridge, in which you said things instead of playing cards. Like bridge you had to pretend you were playing for money or playing for some stakes. Nobody had mentioned what the stakes were. It was all right with me. *(AFTA 29)*

According to Baker, being active, realistic and not expressive of emotion are seen as expected in men (4). In the passage above, all of these traits can be found in Fredric’s words and actions. He is described as a physical person, not one who experiences emotions like love or feeling fondness for her. For Fredric, this is all a game, but instead of playing cards he is here playing with words, perhaps in order for Catherine to fall in love with him so that he can be physical with her instead of the “girls”, who quite clearly are prostitutes working in a brothel for the soldiers.

Another masculine trait Fredric is performing is the role of the active person, while Catherine, his feminine counterpart is the passive one. Fredric is the one kissing, Catherine is the one being kissed. Fredric has his eyes open, being the one who can see and therefore be in charge of the situation while Catherine is having her eyes closed and is, therefore, leaving Fredric in charge of the situation. As Bakes also argues, women are most typically seen as passive (4). Catherine having her eyes closed and leaving Fredric in charge of the situation makes her a passive counterpart to his more active actions. Fredric’s carelessness regarding the situation also bears witness of the masculine traits. As mentioned earlier about the comparison between love and playing card games, he claims to not care about her or her potentially being “a little crazy”, since this is all a game to him in order to get what he wants. Catherine’s eyes being shut in the passage does not only describe her as passive but may also be seen as evidence for her actually being in love with him. She has her eyes closed because she trusts him and believes him take care of her. Perhaps she does not see this as a game the way Fredric does. Not showing emotions as a masculine trait, by focusing on the physical acts is also revealed by Fredric saying how he does not love Catherine or has any “idea of loving her”. The mentioning of the other girls also proves the importance of physical acts for Fredric but also being the active person in relation to women. The other women whom we might assume are prostitutes are described as “climbing all over you and put your cap on backwards” which can be read as them being active and in charge, something Fredric wants to be but perhaps cannot properly be when the women are so active and therefore breaking the normative behavior of women being passive. With Catherine, he can be active since she
stands there in front of him with her eyes closed being passive. Therefore, Fredric can properly perform his masculinity and be the active part of the relationship. Strychacz argues that the relationship between Catherine and Fredric is completely built of masquerades at the beginning of the novel (92). Since these masks seem crucial for Fredric’s masculinity, I would argue that him keeping his eyes opened while hers are closed is another way for him to not only perform the masculine active part, but also that it helps him with keeping his masks in order, if he closes his eyes he will no longer be completely in control, something that appears to be important for his masquerade of masculinity.

Playing with differences of masculinity and femininity is also shown by the whole surroundings, Fredric is as mentioned earlier a soldier in a war, a clear masculine environment. Catherine, on the other hand, is a V.A.D, almost like a nurse, representing her traditional feminine side by caring and looking out for other people. Baker’s study showed how emotions are seen as a feminine trait while being pragmatic is shown as masculine (4). Fredric performs this masculinity by focusing on the physical part of his relationship with Catherine. Since Catherine hardly speaks in this passage it is not possible to know her agency or intentions with the actions happening, we only know what Fredric does. However, her having her eyes closed and therefore leaving the situation in his hands may be read as her accepting her passive feminine role. If Catherine does not see this as a game and instead actually does feel for Fredric, that would expose her as even more feminine, experiencing emotions and not focusing as much on the physical part of the relationship as Fredric does.

An interesting aspect of studying the conversations between Catherine and Fredric is that Catherine at certain points in the novel appears to emasculate Fredric and by that, change the power structure of the relationship. “‘You’re such a silly boy’. She kissed me.” (AFTA 93). Fredric is injured in the hospital, quite unable to move and with Catherine caring for him. Catherine’s words can be read as her being caring and loving of Fredric, calling him a “silly boy” while taking care of him injured in his bed. However, if the power structure through language is studied, Catherine calling Fredric a “silly boy” is instead her establishing some kind of dominance over him in this situation. Catherine minimizes his masculine role by not only referring to him as a “boy” but also by mentioning how he is “silly”, two words with the connotation that make him feel smaller. By studying Catherine’s use of words in combination with the surrounding areas of this situation makes it clear she has him in a powerless situation where she actually is the one in power. The relationship that earlier in the novel appears to have Fredric in the power-position is now different. Catherine nursing him and referring to him as a “silly boy” has made the couple switch roles (Reynolds 115).
Catherine is also through her conversation portrayed as a woman with her own agency, specifically in relation to Fredric. The “game” Fredric mentions earlier when kissing Catherine and comparing her to the girls in the “houses” may appear as being something only Fredric is aware of. However, Catherine may not be so unaware of this so-called game and even plays it on her own. “‘You’re a nice boy.’ She said. ‘And you play it as well as you know how. But it’s a rotten game’” (AFTA 30). Once again, Catherine challenges power structures and minimizes Fredric’s role as the superior by her use of language: both by the use of the word “boy” but also by her almost calling him out on the game of his, even mentioning how it is a bad game and that even though Fredric is trying to play it, he is not doing a good job of it. Catherine not only establishes how she is aware of the game but also challenges Fredric in his masculine game (Strychacz 93). Strychacz argues that the relationship between Catherine and Fredric appears to build on Fredric’s different masquerades of masculinity (92). For Fredric, this game could be his way of performing his masculinity, and Catherine making him aware of that she knows he sees this all as a game not only challenges his masculinity and the power structure performed by their conversations with each other but also that she is a character in the same role-playing he believed he was in charge of (Strychacz 93). Traber argues something quite similar to Strychacz, that Catherine is herself also wearing a mask, which Fredric during this conversation discovers (31). Catherine’s use of words and mentioning of the game Fredric is playing with her does not only reveal Catherine’s awareness of the gender role she is a part of, it also puts her in a position where she has successfully manipulated this performance of gender, describing her femininity in relation to Fredric’s masculinity and making her a woman with her own agency (Traber 31).

The power structure between masculine and feminine is also changed in the relationship between Brett and Jake in The Sun Also Rises. Jake’s masculinity, which as mentioned earlier is damaged due to his inability to perform sexually is instead performed in different ways. Leland argues that money and the exchange of money may be another way for Jake to perform his masculinity (43). One could then argue that this would also be the one arena where Jake also performs his masculinity. Brett, with her masculine outfits, refusal to grow her hair out and sexual activity could according to Butler’s theory of performativity, actually be argued as a character who performs masculine norms more prominently than Jake. Brett’s pragmatic and quite logical side makes her at least appear to be performing a more masculine behavior. However, as mentioned earlier, economic funds and the spending of money is the one arena where Jake can perform his masculinity in relation to Brett and her performance of her masculine traits (Leland 39). Throughout the novel, it is never mentioned what or even if
Brett does in order to make a living. We do know that she got her title from marriage (*TSAR* 51), and it could be assumed that a majority of Brett Ashley’s financial funds do come from marriage since it is never explained where her money comes from, just that she “gets five hundred quid a year” (*TSAR* 201). This can also be supported by her spending time with men who pay for her commodities, such as the count in the first chapters played out in Paris and Robert during her trip with him to San Sebastian.

As mentioned previously, Brett does represent clear masculine traits, both in appearance and behavior. However, throughout the final pages of *The Sun Also Rises* Brett embodies herself, in my opinion, as the most feminine she has ever been throughout the novel. She asks Jake to “Buy a lady a drink” (*TSAR* 214) but also does not drink a lot, a behavior quite different from her previous quite aggressive drinking habit captured in the chapters played out in Pamplona. Brett’s mentioning of herself as a “lady” is one of the only places throughout the novel where she actually does establish her gender, and the fact that she does it in relation to Jake paying for her drinks and food bears evidence that when it comes to financial resources, Brett allows Jake to actually perform his masculinity more properly than she performs a masculine behavior. Brett’s new more feminized behavior, which was fueled by the fact that Jake went to Madrid to visit her in the first place since she told him she was in trouble almost puts her in the “damsel in distress” position where Jake for the first time can fully perform the role of the masculine man. He saves her from her troubles in Madrid, pays for her food and her taxi rides around the city and can for once, since Brett is in trouble financially, perform his masculinity which due to his injury is so dependent on financial funds. The same way Jake and his masculinity depends so heavy on financial funds in relation to other men, I would argue that it is just as important in his relationship with Brett.

In conclusion, this essay has shown that Hemingway’s protagonists Catherine, Fredric, Jake, and Brett throughout the novels behave in ways usually not defined as normative for their gender. In all of the characters a number of different behaviors that are labeled as “belonging” to the other gender can be seen, such as the men being emotional and not that pragmatic and women being more assertive and in control of their sexuality. Catherine Barkley for example, who at first appears to be an incredibly gender conforming woman does show that she has agency and is aware of the games her masculine counterpart Fredric is trying to play with her. Quite an extensive amount of gender studies has been found regarding Hemingway and the men and women in his stories, but not so many that also focus on how and what the characters of the novels say, which is something this essay has attempted to include in the gender analysis. In order to extend this research, a focus on the surrounding
characters could be made, for example, an interesting topic regarding masculinity could be Jake and the homosexual men he encounters with Brett at the beginning of the novel. Another interesting aspect to further study would be to focus more on the environment the characters are in.
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