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The Radical Feminists' Misrepresentation of Catherine Barkley in Ernest Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms*.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Ernest Hemingway (1899-1961) was an American author who, through his life and his work, was known as a masculine writer whose male protagonists displayed courage and solitude. According to his critics, his books have a very narrow set of stereotypical gender characters; the male protagonists are generally adventurous, stoic, self-centered and independent and the females are either submissive, like Jig in *Hills like White Elephants* or man-hating vixens, like Margot Macomber in “The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber”. The representations of women in his books have been much criticized by feminists who claim that he portrays women as belonging to one of the two categories and that they both are misrepresentations of how real women act and speak. Their claim is that the fictional women are representations of Hemingway’s chauvinistic gender ideas, since the majority of females in his books are weak and helpless hangers-on to the strong males. They describe the women in Hemingway’s literature as flat and uninteresting characters; sexist stereotypes instead of nuanced and complex people and argue that they are evidence of the author’s disingenuous imagination. After the release of his 1929 novel *A Farewell to Arms*, critics claimed that he could not depict women at all or that he was better at depicting men without women (Fiedler 318). This paper will analyze two schools of feminism to see how they criticize female characterizations in literature in general and Catherine Barkley in *A Farewell to Arms* in particular and discuss whether or not they are being objective in their criticism.

2. FEMINISM

Feminism is a political and intellectual movement for women’s social and political liberation that has existed in different configurations since the 18th century (Larsson 158). The first feminist female author was Mary Wollstonecraft who in 1792 wrote *A Vindication of the Right of Women*, where she called for “the sexual inequalities in our society to be

eradicated except when love governs the behavior” (Larson 158). In order to reach equality in society she wanted boys and girls to be brought up and educated in the same manner. These early feminists saw that the injustices towards women were repressing all of society and keeping it from moving forward by holding back talented and intelligent people simply because they were women. Women possess certain characteristics that would benefit political life, according to Stuart Mill. He wrote an essay in 1869 called “The Subjection of Women” where he likened the exclusion of women’s rights in society to that of people who were repressed because of the color of their skin, their race or their religion (Larsson 157).

Women’s suffrage was the main focus for feminists in the early 20th century and both socialist and communist ideas came to be part of the movement. The 1960s and 70s brought the “second wave of feminism,” a more radical form of feminist movement that likened the role of the father in the household to that of the government’s power over the people in order to show the complete male dominance in society (Larsson 161). Today, there are many different branches of feminism in the world, but for the purpose of this essay two were chosen to show the different ideas on what gender equality means and how to reach it. The two are radical feminism and liberal feminism and the major difference between them is that in radical feminism the suppression of women as a group is the single most important issue in society and the ideal is for women to be treated as a collective unit, whereas in liberal feminism, people are seen as individuals.

2.1 Radical feminism

This branch of feminism emerged in Europe in the 1960’s with focus on the role of male violence against women, prostitution and inequalities between the genders. In radical feminism, the systematic oppression of women by men is central and the mindset of male superiority is attacked and liberation of all women is called for. Radical feminists state that the female is the superior sex and a social revolution is needed so that women can gain power

in society (Östholm 40-46). Radical feminists believe that the male supremacies are the real beneficiaries of women's oppression and there are huge material benefits to the males at the cost of the females in a society. They see evidence of misogyny, the hatred of women and girls, everywhere. Originally the claim was that biology was the root to this male domination because of the female reproductive system and men's pursuit to control women's sexuality. Shulamith Firestone wrote the book *The Dialectics of Sex*, where she called for women's sexual liberation. Biological women are oppressed and exploited as a class by men and by capitalists, according to Firestone. In 1969 she was one of the founders of the radical feminist movement "Redstockings of the Women's Liberation Movement" whose manifest reads: "Women are an oppressed class. Our oppression is total, affecting every facet of our lives. We are exploited as sex objects, breeders, domestic servants, and cheap labor. We are considered inferior beings, whose only purpose is to enhance men's lives. Our humanity is denied. Our prescribed behavior is enforced by the threat of physical violence" (Redstockings.org). In radical feminism, lesbianism is idealized as the most valuable lifestyle choice, since it means that women's loyalty and energy is spent on other women and not on men, with their demands for subordination (Clayhills 422). Artificial insemination is regarded as a way for women to stop their dependence on men for sexual reproduction and they see the traditional family as the main problem and the root of the suppression of women by men. Radical feminists believe that it is not enough to change society through political and social reforms, but in order for women to gain power over both language and thought in the areas of arts, science and religion, they need to redo the work that has been done in the past in order for the discoveries to be explained, analyzed and interpreted by women. The existing language places men at the center but with this change, women's thoughts and ideas will be included in all these areas and the language will not reflect the notion that males are the norm and females are the deviations (Larsson 162).

2.2 Liberal Feminism

The main goal of liberal feminism is equal rights for men and women in connotations of status and individual rights and the focus is on women themselves being in charge of the change through their own actions. In liberal feminism, the main explanation for the inequalities that exist between the genders is that men and women have not historically been given the same right to exist in the “public room” (Elworth 238-240). With time, as women will be given more important positions in all areas of society, such as in politics and upper management in big businesses, they will attain a more equal status with men. Some liberal feminists can be traced back to the 18th century, but the 1960’s brought new awareness and political activism to the movement (Östholm 36). In contrast to radical feminism, liberal feminists choose to see people as individuals and work for gender equality through political reform. Men and women are different, but these differences need to be celebrated and appreciated equally and women do not have to turn into men, or be adverse towards men, in order to attain an equal status in society. Liberal feminists believe that education, reformation and changed attitudes will eliminate women’s subordination. They believe in women’s right to choose their own path regarding life and career and they support women’s right to abortion and contraception. Gloria Steinem is an American liberal feminist who took part in founding “The Natural Women’s Political Caucus” in 1971 and she also delivered a memorable speech where she said: “There is no simple reform. Sex and race, because they are easy, visible differences, have been the primary ways of organizing human beings into superior and inferior groups, and into the cheap labor on which this system still depends. We are talking about a society in which there will be no roles other than those chosen, or those earned. We are really talking about humanism” (Steinem on History.com). Pushing for equality between the sexes, the words “chosen” and “earned” are used to underline the importance of people being treated as individuals and neither be given opportunities nor be held back because of

their gender. Anybody can choose to have a career or to stay at home to raise children. The most important issue is that all human beings are given the freedom to choose their own path and not be ostracized because of it.

3. FEMINIST LITERARY CRITICISM

Feminist criticism as a theory in literature was introduced at different universities in America and Western Europe in the late 1960's during what is called the "second wave of feminism", the first wave being women's suffrage, and it includes criticism of both female characters created by male authors, so-called androtexts, and female authors, so-called gynotexts (Clayhills 342). The objective in this approach of literary criticism is to give critical response to how females are depicted in literature and question the relationship between the text, power and sexuality that is revealed in the book (Miller in Culler 47). The focus of feminist criticism and theory is the marginalization of women in literature due to the fact that they are often defined as "the other" since typical female characteristics are seen as deviations from male norms and values. Women are often the objects in literature while men are the subjects and this works to sustain the inequalities in society. Some questions that feminist literary critics ask are: "How is the relationship between the men and women portrayed?" "What are the power relationship between men and women?" "Do characters take on traits from the opposite gender? If so, how does this change other's reactions to them?" (purdue.edu). "Feminist studies and women's studies both challenge male intellectual hegemony" according to Bowles and Klein (in Herminingrum 8). Betty Freidan came to play a central role this new literary movement with her book *The Feminine Mystique* from 1963, where she criticized the dominant cultural image of the successful and happy American woman as a housewife and mother. "They were taught to pity the neurotic, unfeminine, unhappy women who wanted to be poets or physicists or presidents. They learned that truly feminine women do not want careers, higher education, political rights- the independence and

the opportunities that the old-fashioned feminists fought for” (15-16). Women’s history has been told in large by male authors and this has given them the power to define what it means to be a woman. Traditionally literature was a way to teach women how to behave as wives and mothers and the females were the objects of desire while the hero was always male. The harsh stereotypes of women in literature from the 17th and 18th centuries were: the inconstant lover, the nagging wife, the shrewish spinster, the disdainful mistress or the seducing whore (Wilcox in Gill and Sellers 34). As more female authors emerged, so did groundbreaking female literary characters, such as Jane Eyre, Elisabeth Bennett and Josephine March, who all challenged the traditional role of subservient women. In 1929 Virginia Woolf’s *A Room of One’s Own* was released and this book is regarded to be the first modern work of feminist literary criticism. The book “addresses the status of women as readers, and raises interesting questions about gender and subjectivity in connection with the gender semantics of the first person” (Goldman in Gill and Sellers 73). In her book *The Second Sex*, first published in 1949, Simone de Beauvoir identifies a set of archetypal myths about woman and claim that these are deeply rooted in cultural beliefs and that they play a part in persuading women of the naturalness of their fate. She uses a master/slave dialectic to describe the relationship between men and women and claim that this has always worked to women’s disadvantage (193). In 1979 *The Madwoman in the Attic* was released, where literature from the 19th century was examined and criticized for depicting women as either monsters or angels (Gilbert and Gubar). Critics using feminist theory research history in order to get an understanding of what society looked like back when the book was written and when the story took place and then analyze both if the depictions are fair and if they are relevant to that specific time period and geographical area. The female persona in literature has shifted with time as women’s role in society has changed and the critics need to take this in to consideration when analyzing historical fiction. Also, feminist theorists must be careful not to marginalize other women by

having a narrow set of rules of how to be a woman, but instead include representations from the wide range of femininity that is present in real life.

3. ANALYSIS

Catherine Barkley has been scrutinized and criticized by radical feminists that claim that she is yet another submissive, dependent and patronizing female character created by Hemingway to contrast the dominant and stoic male protagonist. According to this view, she exists in a world where she is a sexual object to be worshipped and she is defined by her looks and her sexuality and that her submissive and naïve womanly ways lead to her eventual, and expected, death. The radical feminists have really picked up this character as a sign of male chauvinism, but this paper aims to prove their analysis of her to be one-sided and inaccurate. Hemingway's novel can be divided into five books and in each one the relationship between Frederic and Catherine grows and matures. This analysis will focus on the different criticisms aimed at Catherine throughout the stages of the book and show that they are misconstrued and angled. The intention is to analyze Catherine in a historical and social context and demonstrate that through the discourse of the novel she emerges as a strong, determined and powerful force and not at all as a passive and subservient victim. The purpose is also to underline the fact that gender equality means that men and women are given the same rights, opportunities, resources and protection and that they are valued equally, but it does not mean that males and females are the same. Women are struggling to become equals with men in society and according to some radical feminists this means that women should become equally independent, stoic, oppressive and aggressive as the stereotypical male. While these characteristics are seen as acceptable by some feminists, there must also be room for women to choose a different approach in the struggle for equality and a different path in their lives. "An analysis of gender ideology in which women are always innocent, always passive victims of patriarchal power, is patently not satisfactory" writes Michéle Barrett in *Women's*

Oppression Today (110) and thereby underscores the need for more nuanced criticism of the gender stereotypes.

Jackson J. Benson describes Catherine and Frederic's initial encounters by claiming that she is an innocent victim to his manly intentions "He fully intends (he spells this out quite clearly) to take a girl, who is described in terms of a helpless, trembling Henry James bird, and crush her in his hands very casually as part of the game that every young, virile lad must play" (82-83). In fact, when Catherine and Frederic first meet and start seeing each other Catherine plays the role of coy female, but she constantly demonstrates that she is, in fact, playing the same game of attraction as Frederic. She asks him to tell her that he loves her and also says that she loves him, but it is evident by her actions that she is well aware of the fact that it is only a game and she often takes charge of the action, so the stereotype that the masculine is active and the feminine passive is not present here. At one point she tells him to "Please put your hand there again" and on the next page she won't let him put his arm around her shoulders, but says "This is a rotten game we play, isn't it?" (Hemingway 27-28ⁱ). This shows that she is well aware that neither of them is serious when they talk about love during the early stages of their courtship and she often takes charge of the conversation. She repeatedly calls him "a good boy", somewhat belittling his manliness and suggesting that she does not feel subservient to him at all. She takes charge of their sexual interactions, telling Frederic "Oh I love you. Put your hand there again" (27) and later tells him when it is time to stop and say goodnight. Far from being a helpless and trembling bird, Catherine is a playful and willing participant in their early encounters, during the time when they both understand their relationship to be something short-lived and something to be enjoyed at the moment. The initial intention of their relationship is simply to get some relief from the tediousness of their lives at that moment. They are both strangers in a strange land and they manage to find momentarily solace in each other.

In his book *Love and Death in the American Novel*, Leslie Fiedler describes Hemingway's women as "mindless, soft, subservient, painless devices for extracting seed" (318). Catherine, however, is continually exhibiting perspicacious judgment and enthusiasm and has a far more important role in the novel than to be just a sexual object of Frederic's desires. Things seem to happen to Frederic; he gets shot, admitted to the hospital, gets the girl pregnant, gets in a bind during the army's retreat, gets left behind when she dies, while Catherine takes active charge of the changes around her. She gets herself relocated to the hospital in Milan, she works nights and days in the hospital, she goes with him when he has to flee the country after deserting the army and she knows how she is going to make their unborn child legitimate, because she went to the library to find out (226). She is loyal and supportive and she stays positive and calm even in the most stressful and gruesome situations. When Frederic has regrets about fleeing the country, he says: "I feel like a criminal. I've deserted from the army". Catherine replies: "Darling, *please* be sensible. It's not deserting from the army. It's only the Italian army" (194). She has a calm and reassuring quality that makes her a good companion for a friend or a lover.

Another critic that describes Catherine as a shallow and uninteresting character is Millicent Bell, who in her article "Pseudo autobiography and Personal Metaphor" calls her "a sort of inflated rubber woman available at will to the onanistic dreamer" (150). However, she is no more defined as just a sexual being than Frederic is and the fact that they both are enjoying being sexually active together does not change the fact that they are also defined by their occupations, their personalities and their interests, neither one just by their sexuality. They are worshipping each other and this gradually turns into a love so deep that Frederic at one point says "I felt faint with loving her so much" (200). William P. Spofford writes "...just as Catherine's identity is totally dependent on Fredrick, Frederic's identity is totally dependent of Catherine. The mutual love of Frederic and Catherine degrades neither, rather, it

elevates both together” (308). When Frederic is in the hospital she remains in charge, being the person who both makes the decision to keep the relationship going and sets the terms of their involvement. The fact that she spends six months at the hospital having non marital sexual relations with him is another factor proving her to be an unconventional woman during a time where this would be seen as scandalous behavior. She owns her sexuality and enjoys her time with him, or else she would choose to opt out of working nights so frequently. At one point during Frederic’s hospital stay he says: “I’ll have to go back to the front pretty soon” and Catherine replies: “We won’t think about that until you go. You see I am happy, darling, and we have a lovely time. I haven’t been happy for a long time and when I met you perhaps I was nearly crazy. Perhaps I was crazy. But now we’re happy and we love each other. Do let’s just be happy. You are happy, aren’t you? Is there anything I do that you don’t like? Can I do anything to please you? Would you like me to take down my hair? Do you want to play?” Frederic replies: “Yes and come to bed”. She says: “All right. I’ll go and see the patients first” (92). This exchange could at first reading be interpreted as Catherine being submissive and insecure, but on a closer look, one can see that she is completely in charge of the situation. She is the working nurse while he is immobile and he talks about the painful knowledge that he eventually will have to return to the army. She plays her feminine role and her inquiries are mischievous and after she has reassured him that they feel mutual love for each other, she is using these flirtatious questions to get his mind off his pain. Then she promptly leaves him and goes to see the other patients, showing that she is in charge of what they will do and when they will do it.

Judith Fetterley is a radical feminist who in the book *The Resisting Reader: a Feminist Approach to American Fiction* argues that there is apparent evidence of Hemingway’s contempt and pity for women in the creation of Catherine and that sexuality is a big part of it. “Yet, despite the fact that Catherine is sexual not for herself but only for men, she

nevertheless expresses a continual sense of sexual failure and a continual need to punish herself for that failure” (69). At one point, Catherine asks Frederic about his visits with prostitutes that took place before the two of them met and she asks him to tell her what they used to do together (84). This could be interpreted as Catherine feeling insecure about her own abilities to please her man and wanting advice on what else she could do to enhance their sexual activities. However, it could also be seen as further proof that Catherine herself is a woman of adventure whose own experience would possibly be intensified by the stories told by her lover. She is a woman who knows what she wants and despite using language that suggests that she is only there to please her man, there is much evidence suggesting that she is being playful while also getting what she herself wants. “I wish I’d had it to be like you. I wish I had stayed with all your girls...” (230). Catherine is expressing the desire to be sexually deviant just like Frederic and shows a frivolous attitude towards the notion of having sexual affairs.

Toril Moi is a liberal feminist who in the book *Sexual/Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory* finds some fallacies in feminist theory: “Literary works can and should of course be criticized for having selected and shaped their fictional universe according to oppressive and objectionable ideological presumptions, but that should not be confused with failing to be “true to life” or with not presenting “an authentic expression of real experience” (Moi 45-46). She also writes that “...the demands for realism clashes with another demand: that for the representation of female role-models in literature. The feminist reader of this period not only wants to see her own experience mirrored in fiction, but strives to identify with strong, impressive female characters” (47). Every reader projects their own ideas, expectations and feelings upon the characters they read about in a book and therefore no character is true to only one interpretation and all characters are at the mercy of both the writer and the reader, with endless possibilities to construe and misconstrue their intentions

and their actions. If radical feminists fail to identify with Catherine, describing her as someone “not real” would be one way for them to confirm their own set of values by brushing aside the fact that Catherine’s feminine manners are also acceptable choices of how to be a woman. Moi stresses the fact that there must be acceptance for a wider range of female characters in literature, especially with the knowledge that different historical periods have their own cultural norms and standards and seen by modern eyes, it may be difficult to take this into full account when analyzing the characters and their choices. Catherine made some very unconventional choices for her time and place and she needs to be acknowledged for being a trailblazer for the freedom of choice when it comes to religion, sexual liberation and women in the workforce.

At one point Catherine says “There isn’t any me. I’m you. Don’t make up a separate me” (90). This has been interpreted by radical feminist critics to mean that she gives herself up for her man and that she is not her own person anymore, she is in fact less than a person (Flynn 382). But it can also be understood that by saying this she is reassuring him that she is faithful and committed during a conversation where he is displaying insecurities about their relationship. She uses this expression in a loving way to tell him that she is very serious in her commitment to him, and perhaps also that she expects the same dedication from him. Married people often refer to each other as “my other half” so Catherine telling Frederic that they are the same person is neither strange nor scandalous, but a sign of love, fidelity and devotion. When Frederic brings up the question of marriage, saying “I’ll marry you the day you say”, Catherine replies “Don’t talk as though you had to make an honest woman out of me, darling. I’m a very honest woman. You can’t be afraid of something if you are only happy and proud of it. Aren’t you happy?” and he replies “But you won’t ever leave me for someone else?” (91). Here, her self-assurance and sense of independence is evident, proving that she is not a woman who follows society’s norms, but rather chooses to live by her own rules and thereby

redefining the gender boundaries and rules of her time. In her opinion, they do not need a legal document to prove their love and commitment to each other but Frederic feels insecure about this.

Another point of criticism against Hemingway's portrayal of Catherine Barkley is that she is made less important than Frederic because her looks and clothing are not often described, whereas his appearance is much more emphasized, making him seem more important to the story (Rekla 16). But this so-called "underdevelopment" of her character could also be explained by the fact that it is Frederic who tells the story and it would be realistic to assume that he remembers the details of his own appearance during different points in the story more vividly than he would Catherine's. Also, one could argue that there are many more clues to her personality through her language and that those details of their interactions may be more important to his post-mortem descriptions of her than what she was wearing on different occasions.

Further evidence that Catherine is a modern and independent woman of her time is that she lacks religion during a time when being religious was considered the norm and the church had great influence on people's lives. About marriage, Catherine states "You see darling, it would mean everything to me if I had a religion. But I haven't any religion" (106). Frederic, on the other hand, struggles with the idea of religion through the novel and seems indecisive on the subject, suggesting that he is more conservative than she is. Catherine also states that she has no beliefs in a life after death, while Frederic is more hesitant. The ideas of religion and marriage are two factors that have traditionally kept women in the home and they promote the ideal that women are subservient to men. The fact that she opposes both religion and marriage shows that she is a strong feminist role model who does not adapt to the norms of society but instead makes choices that suit her as a person.

Moreover, it is evident that Catherine is well aware of the expected norms and standards of her time and she is challenging these by exclaiming that “You always feel trapped biologically” (110). This shows that she is not comfortable in the traditional female role and that she is very aware of the fact that she is using her submissive style of conversation in order to get her way. She is often “doing gender” and she is reflecting over the fact that it is her job as the woman to be pregnant with child, something that biology has decided and she cannot do anything about. While they are in the boat going to Switzerland, Frederic tells the pregnant, rowing Catherine: “Watch out the oar doesn’t pop you in the stomach” and she answers: “If it did, life might be much simpler” (212-213). Here, she touches on the subject of abortion and the freedom of choice for women when it comes to motherhood. She also later talks about cutting her hair as a way of becoming more like Frederic, another indication that she is playing with the ideas of what it means to be male and female. Once they are in Switzerland they both live a domesticated life, going on walks, making plans for their future together and preparing for the arrival of their baby. There is sometimes a feeling of restlessness in their solitude existence and the topics of their conversation regarding small details, such as Frederic growing a beard, takes on seemingly larger proportions and importance. This is an effective writing tool to give the reader a feeling of long days with not much to do and both Frederic and Catherine get a little agitated with their situation at times. At one point, Catherine asks (about their unborn child): “She won’t come between us, will she? The little brat?” (233), distancing herself from the archetypical loving mother figure by using unexpected language in referring to their baby.

According to Judith Fetterley, Catherine’s death is the only possible ending to this story, since “the only good woman is a dead one, and even then there are questions” (71). She claims that Catherine is nothing but a tool that is used and abused by Fredric to make his life easier and then she dies because she is a woman. But Catherine is in fact getting the same

amount of enjoyment, benefit and satisfaction from their relationship as Fredric is. When he finds out that she is hemorrhaging shortly after giving birth, his devastation shows:

“Everything was gone inside of me. I did not think. I could not think. I knew she was going to die and I prayed that she would not. Don’t let her die. Oh God, please don’t let her die. I’ll do anything for you if you won’t let her die. Please, please, please, dear God, don’t let her die. Dear God, don’t let her die. Please, please, please, dear God, don’t let her die. God, please make her not die. I’ll do anything you say if you don’t let her die.” (254). When Catherine does die, it is a great tragedy for Frederic. He loses not only the woman that he loves, the only woman that he has ever loved, but he is also left with the grief of losing his only child. As many would argue, it is easier for the person dying than for the people left behind who need to cope with the loss and find a sense of purpose to keep living. Moreover, by dying Catherine denies Frederic the role of being the strong male protector and when she asks him to go away at the end of her struggle it is clear that there is nothing he can do to help her. Catherine reassures Frederic by saying “Don’t worry darling...I’m not a bit afraid. It’s just a dirty trick” (255), showing strength and grace in a devastating and scary situation. “The code demands a lust for life and a cheerful disregard of doom” (Whipple Spanier 136) and this code is something that Catherine understood and lived by, not as a passive bystander but as an active force of womanhood.

Ernest Hemingway has been quoted to say “My aim is to put down on paper what I see and what I feel in the best and simplest way” and that is how he created Catherine. Literature is divorced from reality in the sense that the author is free to write his or her own experience and does not need to take in to considerations all the different varieties that exist in real life. The women who specialize in literary criticism belong to the group of women who are in the workforce and they are caught up in the politics of jobs and promotions and may therefore be motivated to criticize depictions of women that make other choices in their lives. There are

women who choose to stay out of the workforce all together, or choose to work fewer hours because they want to spend more time with their children. There are women who are aggressive and forceful in getting what they want, but there are also women with alternative characteristics, such as being more gentle and subtle in their communication style. While women should be able to compete on level grounds with men when it comes to career opportunities, economic gains, political life and social life if they choose to do so, there must also be an allowance for women to opt out and/or make choices that are more “traditionally female” and not be ostracized because of it. In order to strive for equal opportunities, the so-called “typical female” characteristics must also be included in the range of what is seen as normal and real and one cannot force all women to only make choices that are accepted by radical feminists. All women cannot be expected to act more “traditionally male” by being aggressive, dominant, assertive, stoic and self-centered. There are women in the real world who are nurturing and loyal and have submissive manners and it is their right as human beings to make these choices and not be criticized for it, or called “not real”. Two things conflict if radical feminists want a true depiction of reality but only a reality that they are content with. The model for feminism should be that the different “typical female” characteristics are valued on equal level as the different “male characteristics”, for either sex and/or gender, and for these to be included in the norm of what is acceptable to all feminists, instead of being labeled as untrue and unrealistic. The feminist literary critics sometimes analyze part of the text out of its’ historical, political and situational context and thereby oversimplifying their understanding and interpretation of the material.

Toril Moi writes about feminist critics “The new field of literary studies is here presented as one essentially concerned with nurturing personal growth and raising the individual consciousness by linking literature to life, in particular to the lived experience of the reader” (43). Radical feminists have attacked and ridiculed Catherine and they have

neglected to see that she should instead be celebrated because she has the courage, wit and determination to live by her own rules and that makes her a feminist trailblazer. She should not have to take the blame for not being the aggressive and boisterous role model that the radical feminists are looking for. The radical feminists' commitment to their cause has made them incapable of seeing Catherine as a round character and their need to fulfill their political agenda has made them blind to accepting diverse female choices. The world of womanhood is much broader than they allow for and there is great weakness in their refusal to see that Catherine Barkley does not live in the shadow of Frederic, but continually proves herself to be an independent, honorable and courageous woman.

5. CONCLUSION

Catherine Barkley is a character that has been misinterpreted by radical feminist that let her bear the grunt of the criticism that they have of the patriarchal society at large. They claim that she is simple, oppressed, exploited, mindless, shallow and full of self-hatred and that she remains an object throughout the story, just a helpless and hopeless complement to the subject that is Fredrick. She is said to exemplify the contempt and pity that Hemingway felt for all women and at the end of the novel she dies just because she is a woman and that is the only option. Radical feminists have chosen to interpret Catherine in a very limited and one-sided way and have refused to see her for all that she really is. She is a nuanced, adventurous, interesting and real character who lived during a time when the norm for women was to be religious, domesticated and sexually chaste but she chooses a different kind of life. She leaves her native Great Britain to work as a nurse in the midst of a war in a foreign country. When her fiancé dies she chooses to stay on and deal with it in the best way she can even though she is almost mad with grief. She meets Fredrick and is first flirtatious and playful with him and with time their love matures mutually and it is obvious that they are devoted to each other even though she is resistant towards the institute of marriage. She challenges many of

society's norms by being promiscuous and freethinking and lack religion. Her submissive mannerism can give the surface reader the impression that she is a push-over in favor of Fredrick's needs but upon close reading, it becomes apparent that it is not so. The radical feminist readers are trained to look for symptoms of suppression and are fast to label unfairness as they see it, but in the case of Catherine Barkley they are mistaken. The persecution of Catherine is based on first impressions and preconceived notions about the author, not a true analysis of her character. She has the right to choose the manner in which she interacts with her man as long as she is not taken advantage of and she plays coy sexual games with him because she wants to. It is her right as a woman to choose not be overly aggressive and assertive but play out her more "typical feminine" characteristics in interactions with Fredrick and be affectionately attentive and loving towards him. There is a greater acceptance for someone like Catherine within the liberal school of feminism, where the goal is for women and men to be valued equally without the notion that women have to take on stereotypical male characteristics to be deemed real and believable. There are many instances in the book where Catherine takes on the more active and dominant role in her relationship with Fredrick, but even in her more submissive conversations with him she is still his equal and she gives and receives respect. There are also times when she plays with the gender roles and thinks about what it means to be a man and what it means to be a woman. One must read the book in the light of knowing how society was back then, what the norms and expectations were in order to interpret the characters fairly against that backdrop. The liberal feminist believe that a societal change towards gender equality takes place through education and political reform and they would probably agree that someone like Catherine, who broke the mold of what a woman should be like during the 1920's, would be a great role model for the modern woman. Toril Moi writes "Catherine's intelligence and resourcefulness and ability to cope in the social world place her in the category of confident and competent

characters. (29). A woman who is not just a sexual object of desire but a loyal friend, a hard worker, a brave and independent woman with a free will who is not afraid to roll up her sleeves and get in on the action.

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ⁱ Hemingway, Ernest. *A Farewell to Arms*. Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1935. All further references are to this edition.