Taking another look at women and gender in Hemingway's works

Gwendolyn Dale Binks

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TAKING ANOTHER LOOK AT WOMEN AND GENDER IN
HEMINGWAY'S WORKS

A Thesis
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

by
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September 2001

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Date 8/28/01
ABSTRACT

Feminist critics Faith Pullin and Katherine M. Rogers among others have faulted Ernest Hemingway's works for reflecting misogynistic depictions of women in stories such as "Hills Like White Elephants," "The Sea Change," "The End of Something," and "The Snows of Kilimanjaro." They also have judged the relationships between the men and women as male-dominated, lacking a female voice or point of view. I support the contrary argument that Hemingway provided a voice for the post-Victorian woman, a woman exercising her strength within relationships, her sexuality, her femininity, and her freedom from oppression during the twentieth century women's movement. To provide additional support, I explore gender differences and relate them to some of Hemingway's male and female characters.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Professors Elinore Partridge, Bruce Golden, and Clark Mayo have supported me considerably in writing this thesis and in my overall academic experience. Dr. Ron Chen and the staff as a whole at Cal State San Bernardino have provided tremendous support.
To my family, especially Mom.
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Feminist critics Faith Pullin and Katherine M. Rogers among others have faulted Ernest Hemingway's works for reflecting misogynistic depictions of women. They have summed up the author’s female characters as weak non-people and viewed the male characters as subjugating the women in stories such as "Hills Like White Elephants," "The Sea Change," "The End of Something," "and "The Snows of Kilimanjaro." They also have judged the relationships between the men and women as one-sided, male-dominated, lacking a female voice or point of view. By doing a close reading of these short stories while keeping in mind the time period during which the author wrote them, I hope to support the contrary argument that Hemingway provided a voice for the post-Victorian woman, a woman exercising her strength within relationships, her sexuality, her femininity, and her freedom from oppression during the twentieth century women's movement.

In "Hemingway and the Secret Language of Hate," Pullin analyzes the role of women in male-female relationships in several of Hemingway's short stories, finding a way to
relegate the women to fit a subjugated position. For example, Pullin sees the female character, Marjorie, in “The End of Something” as merely a used sexual toy having just been dumped by her boyfriend, Nick, who says the relationship isn’t fun anymore. Pullin thinks Hemingway has left out Marjorie’s voice: “Marjorie’s views are uncanvassed and irrelevant” (187). This is surely a grave misreading of the story; Marjorie does not fall apart when Nick breaks off their love affair. Instead, she leaves him at once; she grabs the oars and shatters the male-centered image of a romantic rowboat ride as she rows herself away from him.

Pullin and other critics who have seen Hemingway’s characterization of women as male-dominated, voiceless beings have not recognized, I would suggest, the power in his female characters. By looking at the female’s actions, inactions, i.e., silences, and behavior, not relying on dialogue alone, the reader can discern the strength of the female.

To support this view that Hemingway creates powerful women in his short stories, I explore the following ideas. In this chapter, I look at the feminist criticism that was seemingly born out of Hemingway’s self- and society-imposed
machismo image of the 1930s. This criticism, written in the 1960s and 1970s, views Hemingway’s female characters as debilitated by the males, but critics of later decades unfold the depth and strengths of the women. In the second chapter, I argue that the idea that Hemingway’s women characters were the antithesis of the domestic woman, embodying instead the “New Woman” of the early twentieth century. I argue as well that Hemingway’s female characters represent a development of that movement. To provide background, I offer an exploration of the women’s movement, including the period leading up to the 1920s and 1930s, the time when the short stories discussed were published. In the third chapter, by taking a look at the gender differences between men and women, as explained in Pamela Smiley, Deborah Tannen, Rhoda Unger and Mary Crawford’s works and works of others, I hope to show that the way Hemingway’s male and female characters interact in the stories falls into common patterns of gendered behavior described by current research, and therefore not they are not representative of males dominating females. In the final chapter, I look at Helen in one of Hemingway’s most complexly developed stories, “The Snows of Kilimanjaro,” and show that a close reading reveals her depth and
strength. As Charles J. Nolan points out, Helen and her interactions with her lover Harry often are read too simply and superficially as a man blaming his wife's money for his stagnant life. The two characters are fused inherently so that an exploration of Helen requires an equally deep exploration of Harry. Understanding them as a unit explains a great deal about Helen's character and her ability to capture the reader's sympathies.

In Hemingway's "The End of Something" (1924), "Hills Like White Elephants" (1927), "The Sea Change" (1938), and "The Snows of Kilimanjaro" (1936), I found a recurring opinion among men and women readers to be that the female characters seem subjugated in a somewhat misogynistic environment. Some of this opinion was formed from reading and discussing previous critical opinion of Pullin and Rogers and others that had circulated about Hemingway and his literature. These critics have seen his female characters as being dominated by the male characters and lacking an identity within the stories. Other critics who discuss Hemingway's women characters in this way include Judith Fetterly, Leslie Fielder, and Wilma Garcia. Early critics who praised the author as the ultimate in machismo also fueled this reputation.
In a study of Hemingway’s critical reputation, Susan F. Beegel pointed to these critics as giving Hemingway the widely acknowledged reputation of misogynistic writer:

When potential readers reject Hemingway as indifferent to minorities and hostile to women, they are often responding not to Hemingway’s fiction, but to the indifference and hostility of some of his early critics, and a negative image of the author those influential first admirers unintentionally projected. (277)

In the 1970s, Judith Fetterly had gone so far as to say that Hemingway’s A Farewell to Arms delivers a message to women that “the only good woman is a dead one” (qtd. in Pullin, 173). In the 1980s, Faith Pullin reads Hemingway’s texts as shrouds for a “secret language of hate” between his men and women characters (172). Because of his prose style—self-described as an iceberg with “seven-eighths of it under water for every part that shows”—which aims to leave it up to readers to unearth the depths and truths in the story, Hemingway had been criticized for a perceived lack of characterization (Baym et al. 1686). Pullin sees his people as “merely part of the background,” if present at all in the stories. She believes Hemingway “has no real
interest in character and therefore no genuine comprehension of, or expertise in, the fictive treatment of human relationships” (181).

In the 1990s, Janice R. Walker continued this vein of criticism with her essay “The Forgotten Female: Hemingway as Misogynist.” On the one hand, she feels “women do figure importantly in many of Hemingway’s works (with the obvious exception of the collection of short stories, entitled Men Without Women).” (Perhaps it was unexpected that Hemingway put “Hills Like White Elephants,” one of his most important short stories about women and women’s issues, in that collection, but Walker leaves that fact out of her discussion.) On the other hand, she says, “I believe that Hemingway was not presenting women at all—but I also don’t believe that he was attempting to” (par. 37).

Katherine M. Rogers was a pioneer of feminist criticism of Hemingway’s works. She held the opinion that the women characters lacked depth, “were more fantasy than real people,” “undemanding primitives,” and the male characters devalued the women (Rogers 247).

Rogers points to Nick Adams, who shows up in “The End of Something” and other short stories, as an unfavorable male character. Rogers writes that he holds the view that
women are not important to a genuinely virile man” (248). Nick talks with his friend Bill about the “old man,” fishing, and getting a job, which proves that, like many young men, he is struggling through an age during which immaturity and responsibility are at odds. Brian Way champions this idea when he discusses what he calls Nick’s “double loss—of Marjorie, and of the innocent pre-adolescent world of boyhood experience which he had already sacrificed when he began to love her” (162). He is experiencing a common reaction to growing out of high-school age.

However, Rogers believes Hemingway wrote with a particular view of women and men in mind:

The truly virile man, and the one women love, keeps them well under control and regards them as no more than a pleasant pastime. A man who regards woman as anything more allows her to gain the upper hand, and a woman who gains the upper hand necessarily destroys the man. (251)

In fact, Hemingway had a reputation as being a writer for men. In his essay, “Academic Viagra: The Rise of American Masculinity Studies,” Bryce Traister points out that Hemingway’s readers who constructed the machismo image
of his life and works may be operating on an assumption of a society-imposed male grandiosity inflicted on him while ignoring a reflection of the culture at a time when women were emerging as centralized selves, not "others," in society: "The text emerges out of an authorship whose designing intention may not be structured by the truths of culture" (286).

One of the truths early twentieth century males wanted to believe in was a decidedly male ideology. Traister cites film critic Gaylyn Studlar, who believed "there was a veritable obsession with the attainment of masculinity" during the early twentieth century (qtd. in Traister 287). Joe Dubbert, author of A Man's Place, adds to the argument:

The peace and the "new times" of the twenties, followed by a devastating depression, put a severe stress on American men, especially those who idealized the masculine past and who felt compelled to live up to the tenets of a masculine image that stressed aggressiveness and domination. (qtd. in Traister 287)

The strength of Nick Adams's girlfriend, Marjorie, in "The End of Something" was overlooked perhaps because male readers and critics found in Hemingway's texts what they
wanted to find: an answer to their need and plea for masculine affirmation. According to Traister, "[i]n a perhaps unexpected (even unwitting) concession to authorial and readerly intentionality, we read that Hemingway’s readers want one thing, while his texts deliver another" (286). Consequently, Marjorie, one of Hemingway’s depictions of the modern woman, would be overshadowed.

Traister counters Hemingway’s machismo reputation by pointing out the author’s embrace of “gender fluidity”:

[T]he very men formerly associated with masculinist cultural privilege and projection re-emerge here as deviant, as other to the culture for which they claim to speak and which they criticize. (286)

Traister’s version of “other” here resembles the other that Sidonie Smith discusses in her essay on nineteenth century women:

Product of patriarchy’s binarism, the architecture of the ‘self of essences’ rests upon and reinforces the specularization of ‘woman’ as the Other through whom ‘man’ constructs his stature, status, and significance. (80)
However, Traister's "other" is the male other of today, decentralized from the vapid machismo ideology set forth centuries ago. He explains:

Because of the historically isomorphic relations between men and culture, men and history, men and philosophy, and men and literature, and the historical non-congruity between women and culture, women and history, etc., the new historiography of manhood proposes to interrupt the prevailing masculinist isomorphism in part by positioning masculinity not as simultaneous to culture but rather as other to it. (286)

Adopting this proposition and applying it to Hemingway's texts allows readers to discover the "other" maleness and the female characters' strengths. With further consideration of Marjorie, this perspective emerges.

Nick and Marjorie perform the conventional romantic ritual of being together in a rowboat on a lake. Only here, Marjorie is keeping track of her fishing line by holding it in her teeth—not the female depiction readers of early twentieth century literature might expect (ES 80). Alone, she also took the boat out after they reached shore.
to drop the fishing line in the water and pulled the boat back up onto the beach with the oars upon her return. She was Hemingway’s image of a post-Victorian young woman embracing modern principles and the image of a woman capable of more than bearing and raising children and being a good Christian.

Looking further into the story yields more insight into Marjorie’s character. The dialogue suggests a tension between the couple. Nick meets some of Marjorie’s statements with silences:

“Can you remember when it was a mill?”

Marjorie asked.

“I can just remember,” Nick said.

“It seems more like a castle,” she said.

Nick said nothing. (ES 79-80)

Young Marjorie holds the romantic ideal of prince and princess together in their castle, an ideal that Marjorie intends to fulfill with Nick through marriage. This is not to say she upholds the traditional domestic role. Marriage at that time had become an act that was embarked upon through choice, one that the male and female made out of mutual love and respect:
Premarital intercourse became more common, and this contributed to changing ideas about marriage. A new "companionate marriage" promised individual fulfillment, with couples bound together by mutual love and sexual attraction, not concepts of duty. This was essentially a middle-class ideal, however, that did not extend to many immigrants, rural folk, poor whites, or African-Americans. (History Channel, "Marriage," 11/21/2000)

But Marjorie's desires are not shared by Nick. He ignores her attempt to submit the idea indirectly. The discussion of gender differences in Chapter Three shows that women stating their needs or desires indirectly proves to be a component of their method of communication.

As the fishing trip presses on, Marjorie, sensing the tension, confronts Nick. She asks him twice what the matter is, pressing the issue. Each time he answers, "'I don't know.'" Finally, she says, "'Go on and say it.'" Nick already has recognized her able modern-woman status. He tells her she knows everything and that she knows that's true. She demands that he "'cut it out.'" When he says it again, Marjorie doesn't respond. When he tells her a third
time that she knows everything, she responds: "Oh, shut up," Marjorie said. "There comes the moon." Marjorie knows by pressing this point, Nick has asserted his unfavorable feelings toward her. When she tells him to "go on and say it," he finally does:

"It isn't fun any more."

He was afraid to look at Marjorie. Then he looked at her. She sat there with her back toward him. He looked at her back. "It isn't fun any more. Not any of it."

She didn't say anything. He went on.

"I feel as though everything was gone to hell inside of me. I don't know Marge. I don't know what to say." (ES 81)

Marjorie reaches for understanding: "Isn't love any fun?" Coldly, Nick responds: "No."

Without hesitation, Marjorie stands up and tells Nick, who is sitting with his head in his hands, that she is taking the boat. "You can walk back around the point," she tells him. He offers to push the boat off for her, but Marjorie refuses. She rows herself away from him (ES 81-82).

Marjorie is the picture of the early twentieth century's New Woman here: self-reliant, disciplined, fair,
assertive, as Chapter Two will show. Nick doesn’t see or hear her emotional reaction: “He could hear Marjorie rowing on the water,” but he did not hear crying or sighing. He hasn’t earned the right to; he failed to respect Marjorie for the emotional and physical investment she put into the relationship. Therefore, she will not invest herself further emotionally. Marjorie first shatters the image of the domestic woman by taking charge of what were largely considered to be masculine situations. Then she eludes the expected maudlin female response to the break-up, avoiding any further emotional investment in the relationship.

Charles J. Nolan heightens Marjorie’s presence:

More mature than Nick, we recognize that Marge is lucky to be rid of him. In this story, as in others, our sympathies are with Marge, not Nick, with the woman, not the man. (213)

A study of Marjorie shows that Hemingway recognized, consciously or not, the new station of women in the early twentieth century.

Hemingway took snapshots of life in many of his short stories, perhaps from an autobiographical standpoint as many critics and biographers have speculated. Carlos Baker had done extensive research on Hemingway’s life in the
1950s and '60s particularly. He reports on "events," a fact that Pullin recognized: "What Hemingway seems to pursue in his writing is the physical epiphany in which the 'event' is the sensation itself" (173). However, the events are the icy tips of Hemingway's iceberg style of writing; in the depths of his texts lies true human interaction.

Taking the quintessential human-interaction story, "Hills Like White Elephants," based on a conversation between Jig and her American companion on whether or not she should have an abortion, many critics such as Hilary K. Justice, Stanley Renner and Nadine DeVost have looked at female characters in Hemingway and seen an alternative view to the subjugated woman. They have seen beyond Pullin's view of an antagonistic, hysterical couple (189). However, on one hand, Nolan sees Jig as "in some ways the typically submissive woman—at one point, she tells her lover that she will go through with the risky abortion 'Because I don't care about me'" (214). On the other hand, Howard L. Hannum examined Jig's character closely to find that "[r]eading the girl's decision as a mere submission to the American's wishes is to ignore the continuing evolution of both her character and the central trope in the final passages. ...
She is not the 'neurotic' slave Austin Wright saw or the 'little girl' Virginia Woolf saw in her" (par. 28).

Jig is a New Woman finding ways to assert herself, one of which is through irony. Reading the statement that Nolan refers to with an ironic tone reveals Jig's attempt to get what she wants—the baby and the American. Pamela Smiley agrees that Jig "wants both the American and the baby" (89). Pamela Smiley's "Gender-Linked Miscommunication in 'Hills Like White Elephants'" offers insight to perspectives on reading Jig's conversation as submissive:

Because women's language in general, and Jig's in particular, focuses on emotions rather than facts and objects, it is judged more ambiguous, less direct and more trivial than masculine speech. If Jig is flighty, trivial, and deferential, then it must be remembered that all of those terms are judgments which depend on a foreign standard, maleness. (83)

Taken out of the box of maleness, it is clear Jig asserts herself in the conversation. She does so in a way that reflects a late twentieth century principle: a woman's right to choose. Her ultimate goal, to make the final
decision, is clear; several aspects point to that fact, including her attitude. She knows that the American wants to discuss the abortion, but she moves the conversation to other areas: drinking—"What should we drink?"; the hills—"They look like white elephants."; the beaded curtain—"They've painted something on it. What does it say?"; and she revisits these discussions twice before the American brings the conversation to abortion. Then she avoids the discussion because the American insensitively explains the operation to her, as if the fact that it was "simple" would make things better for her. She continues using irony to make her point:

"And you think then we'll be all right and be happy."

"I know we will. You don't have to be afraid. I've known lots of people that have done it."

"So have I," said the girl. "And afterward they were all so happy." (HLWE 213)

She is setting precedents for other women who also are ascertaining their new status as modern women; she has no guidelines on how to handle the status. Using irony proves
a safe bet; she can appear polite and reserved while she works to diffuse the abortion idea, which upsets her.

Irony helps her exercise her new status as a modern woman with rights, but it ignites some of the tension between the couple. It might normally be a woman’s concern here to reduce tension; Smiley suggests Jig exercises the female “role of making others feel at ease by decreasing distance and showing a lack of hostility” (91). However, Jig fuels the tension with ironic statements such as the response quoted above as well as in other observations: “‘Everything tastes of licorice. Especially the things you’ve waited so long for, like absinthe’” (HLWE 212).

Becoming the New Woman means Jig has to use ways of communicating that are unlike those she knew to be traditional nineteenth century ways, when “a young lady was only worth as much as her chastity and appearance of complete innocence” (Landow, “Victorian Theories of Sex and Sexuality,” par. 6).

This “appearance of complete innocence” is what Jig recognized in the people she knew who were “all so happy” after ridding themselves of the burden of parenthood. She knows that society expected a woman to uphold an outward appearance of happiness, which is what she would be
required to do after her abortion. Her ironic statements are a recognition of such societal conventions, those that she wants to act against. The American doesn’t recognize her irony because he does not realize she wishes to rebel against those conventions, and he may not even be aware that the conventions constrain her.

In creating characters like Jig and Marjorie, who recognized the opportunities afforded each of them as a New Woman in the early twentieth century, Hemingway captured a piece of history. An exploration of this history in conjunction with a study of the female character in "The Sea Change" will display what Hemingway must have recognized taking place with women’s issues. The female character displays characteristics of her expected female behavior while simultaneously displaying characteristics of the New Woman, which developed out of a strong feminist movement set in both England and America.
CHAPTER TWO
MARJORIE AND THE OTHERS INHERIT A LEGACY

In discussions of Hemingway's "Hills Like White Elephants," "The End of Something," "The Sea Change," and "The Snows of Kilimanjaro," female characters reflect the empowerment bestowed upon women by the work of many nineteenth century activists in England and America. Exploring nineteenth and twentieth century women's history allows one to discover the disjunction of Victorian Era (the reign of Queen Victoria, 1837-1901) feminism and the station of many women in the mid-twentieth century. Although "[t]he feminist movement reached a low ebb during the 1940s and 1950s," Ernest Hemingway's short stories published in the 1920s and 1930s offer some insight to what women were experiencing before feminism began to wane (History, "Feminist Movement," par. 13).

In order to provide a fit sampling of what women were experiencing at the time the short stories were written, it is important to explore the women's history of early twentieth century England and America. In the short stories discussed in this thesis, one of the female characters, Marjorie, was definitively American. Jig in
“Hills” must have been non-American, probably European, due to the distinction between her and “the American” who was her lover. Helen in “Snows” lived in both America and Europe at various times. And the girl in “Sea Change” was in Paris at the time of her affair. Therefore, throughout this exploration of women’s history, both England—because it was a key player in the feminist movement in Europe—and America will be included in the discussion.

One of the key issues women concentrated on during the nineteenth and early twentieth century women’s movement was women’s suffrage. The push for suffrage began in England during the Victorian Era and continued with women in America:

The idea of woman suffrage grew in response to the nearly universal enfranchisement of white males and female participation in abolitionism after the 1820s. But in a culture that exalted the domestic role of women, few people argued the merits of female enfranchisement. (History, “Suffrage,” par.17)

Because of the established importance of women’s domestic station, it proved to be a struggle for women to champion suffrage and other women’s rights. In the 1800s,
roles of men and women were clearly defined and kept women in a category that has confined them for centuries. Women’s ability to reproduce held them to their domestic station throughout history, as an evolutionary model constructed by Victorian theorists shows:

According to the model, since men only concerned themselves with fertilization, they could also spend energies in other arenas ... On the other hand, woman’s heavy role in pregnancy, menstruation (considered a time of illness, debilitation, and temporary insanity), and child-rearing left very little energy left for other pursuits. As a result, women’s position in society came from biological evolution—she had to stay at home in order to conserve her energy, while the man could and needed to go out and hunt or forage. (Landow, “The Victorian Web,” Theories, par. 4)

However, women fought to transform their domestic image. During the Victorian Era, there were a great many milestones for women. While “Victorian” connotes repression and prudishness, nonetheless, it actually was a period of growth toward a societal change for women (Landow,
"Feminism"). In fact, it was considered a time when the first feminist movement was born:

The strong and visible women's movement that was born in the late 1960s was not the first feminist social movement. A previous women's rights movement had reached its peak over a hundred years earlier with the Seneca Falls Declaration of 1848, which explicitly rejected the doctrine of female inferiority then taught by academics and clergy. (Unger and Crawford 4)

The floodgates for women's rights opened. In 1847, chloroform was first used during childbirth; the Women's Rights Association was founded in the United States in 1848; the first National Women's Rights Convention was held in Worcester, Massachusetts in 1850; and higher education for women in America improved with the rise of women colleges and women's attendance at regular universities by 1900 (Landow and Women's International Center, 8/12/2001).

These events laid a path toward change for women. Many Victorian women joined the women's movement and did not quietly accept the domestic role. In 1846, Anna Jameson wrote "Woman's Mission," "Woman's Position," and "On the Relative Social Position of Mothers and Governesses,"
spreading the antithesis of the domestic role in England. The women’s suffrage petition was presented to the House of Lords in 1851 in England; in 1852, a judge ruled that a man may not force his wife to live with him; the first women’s college in England was founded in 1869; and the Married Woman’s Property Act was drafted in 1870. The Bronte sisters invented fictional heroes, who were subjects of strength and self-determination. Specifically Charlotte Bronte’s Jane Eyre, a Bildungsroman, which more often had a male as the central character, enjoyed a female hero as its central character. Legislation taking place included the Child Custody Act of 1839 and the Education Act of 1870, which allowed women to serve on school boards, affording them an opportunity to hold positions of power (Landow, “Timeline”).

Nineteenth century women empowered themselves through literature and education, and as much as they could through government. For instance, Margaret Fuller especially drove the feminist movement by writing texts such as “Woman in the Nineteenth Century,” and Margaret Sanger—in opposition to Anthony Comstock’s success in legally squelching the circulation of birth control information—pushed for legalized birth control methods that would free women from
having multiple pregnancies, which often became debilitating to women (History, "Margaret Fuller," "Margaret Sanger"; Nagel 92).

Many of the actions taken for the movement required considerable effort on the part of women to change their status in both English and American society. As Ann Douglas found in her research for *The Feminization of American Culture*, the work of a key female writer of the nineteenth century, Sarah Hale, proves that the role of a highly moral Christian woman was the only identity a woman could adopt in society; women's education made serious gains only after the Civil War (Douglas 45, 59). Douglas refers to the Christian identity as "claustrophobically cramped, if sacred" (45). However, many women accepted it, trying to establish a viable status in society. At the same time, the identity endorsed a change for women's stations.

As Douglas indicates:

The willingness of literary-minded women like Hale and her readers to court such self-evaluation and self-restriction suggests that they were engaged in a struggle for identity and esteem. (45)
But change would not come easily as long as women’s reform activities, as Douglas found, “were contained within traditional, if strategically rephrased, notions of the feminine role” (45).

Nonetheless, women pursued their rights. Attaining the right to vote became the central focus for women in England and America. In England, Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon was a key figure in pushing for women’s suffrage. The National Union of Women’s Suffrage Societies was developed, as well as the Women’s Social & Political Union. The Women’s Suffrage Petition was presented to the House of Lords in 1851.

Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony pushed the suffrage issue in America. They led the National Woman Suffrage Association, promoting a Constitutional Amendment to secure female voting rights. Women’s struggle to procure suffrage was resolved fully with the addition of the 19th Amendment on August 26, 1920. It marked the culmination of the nineteenth century feminist’s toil to evolve with regard to women’s rights. However, suffrage had veiled other causes, which should have included equal pay, marriage reform, more liberal divorce laws, and “self-sovereignty.” Suffrage reserved a station of prime
importance among women like Susan B. Anthony who saw it as "the pivotal right" (History, "Suffrage"): In the last decade of the suffrage campaign, the word feminism first came into use. Its appearance marked a watershed dividing the long suffrage crusade from modern feminism. During the course of the struggle for suffrage, the ballot had assumed paramount importance, obliterating the once-broad agenda of women’s rights. (History, "Feminist Movement," par. 10)

Once it had been attained, suffrage waned in importance among women’s rights issues. Before the feminist movement stagnated after World War II, suffrage yielded to other issues:

Modern feminists envisioned a new type of emancipation embracing political equality, economic independence, liberation from convention, and changed relations between the sexes. (History, "Feminist Movement," par. 10)

Further impetus of the women’s movement, however, incited paradoxes as it continued. Modern feminists "stressed, variously, women’s equality with men and differences from men. They advocated both individualism and
gender solidarity" (History, "Feminist Movement," par. 10). Women continued to struggle after they acquired suffrage and continued pushing for more rights. In addition, Douglas points out that society had not yet solved the problem of a dampened female existence after the nineteenth century:

The tragedy of the nineteenth-century northeastern society is not the demise of Calvinist patriarchal structures, but rather the failure of a viable, sexually diversified culture to replace them. "Feminization" inevitably guaranteed, not simply the loss of the finest values contained in Calvinism, but the continuation of male hegemony in different guises. The triumph of the "feminizing," sentimental forces that would generate mass culture redefined and perhaps limited the possibilities for change in American society. Sentimentalism, with its tendency to obfuscate the visible dynamics of development, heralded the cultural sprawl that has increasingly characterized post-Victorian life. (13)

Furthermore, while American women reaped the benefits of their struggle with the addition of the 19th Amendment to
the Constitution, twenty years after this milestone event, the women's movement stagnated until the late 1960s (Unger and Crawford 4). The National Woman's party, formed by Alice Paul and other militant suffragists in 1913 and considered "the only group still committed to sexual equality" with its battle to pass the Equal Rights Amendment, lost much of its power. Many organizations "shrank and vanished or else lost their feminist drive" (History, "National Women's party," "Feminist Movement," par. 13). Even though women held the country together working as men fought abroad during the World War II, their influence in other areas remained impotent at this time, dampening the goals set in the 1920s and 1930s:

World War II undermined women's egalitarian goals. During the war, women won attention as workers in defense industries, but in public life women had little impact on policymaking. (History, "Feminist Movement," par. 13)

After the wars, a longing to return to pre-war bliss caused women to revert to their hyperdomestic standing in society and the feminist movement froze:

The postwar era represented a nadir of feminist history. Characterized by suburbanization,
consumerism, and the baby boom, the 1950s constituted a domestic decade. Mass culture emphasized women's family roles, disparaged career women, condemned working mothers, and labeled feminism a form of deviance. (History, "Feminist Movement," par. 13)

The "New Woman"—"fearless, bright, eager to participate in work, in play, in marital sex" (Sanderson 173)—clearly was not fully embraced by society for long; before she disappeared in the 1940s, Hemingway immortalized her in the female characters in his short stories. According to Sanderson, "the New Woman contributed heavily to Hemingway's own image of the ideal woman" (173).

Robert D. Crozier, in his essay "The Mask of Death, the Face of Life: Hemingway's Feminique," illustrates the impact Hemingway had on the representations and general assumptions of women:

Perhaps the 20th century owes to Hemingway, in part, what the 19th owed, in part, to Ibsen ...

It is a supportive role, but its ultimate goal is a true, proportional equality, a participating feminine role before which older concepts of inferiority and superiority will be totally
demolished. It is fascinating to think that one who enjoyed the universal endearment of the name "Papa" ... might ultimately be seen as a David who slew the Goliath of patriarchism and paternalism. (255)

Crozier explores this slaying by looking at three of Hemingway's female characters, one of whom is Pilar in *For Whom the Bell Tolls:

Women have a greater ability than men to see, hear, smell, and know mysteries that men notice not at all or ... regard as nonsense. Pilar abounds in these capabilities. (240)

Creating female characters with such potency, proficiency, and facility, Hemingway allowed readers an insight to this New Woman in the early twentieth century, which is why Crozier likened Hemingway to Ibsen. Through Hemingway's works, this New Woman imprinted herself historically as a self-sufficient, resolute force to be sociologically integrated. Look for her in "The End of Something" as Marjorie; in "Hills Like White Elephants" as Jig; in "The Snows of Kilimanjaro" as Helen; and in "The Sea Change" as the girl.
These female characters represent something altogether different from their expected domestic position. Each woman and each issue tackled in the stories presents an opposition to the domestic role. Hemingway created women reacting to a new station, the antithesis to the domestic.

When Marjorie rows herself away in a boat after being jilted by her lover, when Helen takes to the African plain at night to shoot dinner, when "the girl" goes off to have a lesbian love affair, and when Jig plots to make her own decision whether or not to have an abortion, Hemingway's fictional women no longer appear subjugated. As Charles J. Nolan, Jr., notes in his essay "Hemingway's Women's Movement," Hemingway, intentionally or unintentionally, sympathized with women's struggle to break free of old restrictions and embrace a new role:

Whatever his personal idiosyncrasies (and there were many), as a writer he saw more clearly than perhaps even he knew. Throughout his work up to the late thirties, there runs a strong sympathy for the plight of women, a sympathy that at one point, in fact, is expressed in feminist rhetoric and rage. (209)
In the twentieth century, Hemingway delineated the
effects of bold feminist moves by empowering his female
characters. Rena Sanderson points out Hemingway’s
recognition of the women’s movement in his fiction:

Although Hemingway’s fictional treatment of
gender necessarily proceeded from his personal
psychology, that very personality was shaped by,
and was reacting to, biographical and historical
circumstances that included the increasing
influence of women within the literary world and
over American culture generally. (193)

While still recognizing politeness and fairness—
especially to their lovers—to be desired virtues, the
characters assert themselves in ways that reflected a
breaking away from societal expectations of a woman during
a period when restrictions on women’s sexuality and
domestic duty were loosening: “During the early decades of
the twentieth century a sexual revolution took place”
(History. “Marriage,” par. 6).

Fragments of this revolution can be found in “The Sea
Change,” for example. In the story a girl converses with
her lover in a bar. He is upset with her because she plans
to have an affair. However, of her lover, the man says,
"I’ll kill her." The girl plans to have an affair with another woman. In 1992, Catherine R. Stimpson wrote about the lesbianism of Gertrude Stein, who coincidentally was one of Hemingway’s friends and confidants. According to Stimpson, Stein upheld the "decorum" of her early generation by keeping her private homosexual lifestyle private: "Stein’s lie, then, is at once manipulative and courteous. The author delicately refuses to stir her readers up too much" (153). Aside from simply stirring up his readers, though, Hemingway was capturing a piece of the early twentieth century social revolution by bringing out into the open what many wanted to be kept private—a lifestyle critical to many women.

Considering the girl in "The Sea Change," the "liberation from convention" that modern feminists were striving for is evident. The girl feels that her having an affair with a woman requires no explanation; when asked by her male lover if she could have "'gotten into some other jam,'" the girl simply responds with, "'It seems not'" (SC 302). The affair is a necessity to the girl, and she exercises her power as a New Woman in order to have it: "You’re a funny girl."
“You’re not. You’re a fine man and it breaks my heart to go off and leave you—”

“You have to, of course.”

“Yes,” she said. “I have to and you know it.” (SC 303)

Exercising her station as a New Woman affords the girl the luxury of having her sexual and emotional needs met openly. While Stein felt at the time that she had to avoid stirring up her readers with the open disclosure of her lesbianism, Hemingway was not only merely putting the issue out there, he did so while depicting the girl as victorious in having her affair, which the man labels “perversion” until she defends it:

“‘Vice is a monster of such fearful mien,’” the young man said bitterly ...

“Let’s not say vice,” she said. “That’s not very polite.”

“Perversion,” he said.

She defends her need for the affair:

“I’d like it better if you didn’t use words like that,” the girl said. “There’s no necessity to use a word like that.”

“What do you want me to call it?”
"You don't have to call it. You don't have to put any name to it."

"That's the name for it."

"No," she said. "We're made up of all sorts of things. You've known that. You've used it well enough." (SC 304)

With this last statement, the man agrees to let her go, which is what she hopes for: to have his consent, even though she would probably go anyway. She believes in remaining polite in her relationship with him; she points out two instances when he is being impolite. Becoming the New Woman does not mean doing away with conventions like politeness. She is sensitive to the man's feelings and demonstrates calm strength to reveal a powerfully subtle sense of autonomy. The girl refuses to keep her natural human predilections suppressed, which shows the women's movement had made enough of an impact for Hemingway to recognize and create such a character, one that readers might consider unlike many female characters they had come across in other texts.

Hemingway's short stories posit a need for further exploration of gender differences. "Hills Like White Elephants" is a prime source for a gender study. Several
authors like Smiley uncover the true natures of the main characters in the story and their gender-specific ways of dealing with a difficult situation. In the late twentieth century, gender studies, especially Deborah Tannen’s studies of gendered speech, show patterns in the behavior of men and women in conversation that can be applied to the story. Linked to the behavior of Hemingway’s characters, these patterns provide insight into the author’s comprehension and depiction of women.
CHAPTER THREE
EXPLORING GENDER DIFFERENCES BETWEEN
HEMINGWAY’S MALE AND FEMALE CHARACTERS

Hemingway depicts his female characters with raw insight, allowing for verifiable society-imposed behavior patterns to illuminate feminine characteristics without passing judgment on their propriety. In "Hills Like White Elephants," the way Jig communicates conveys her socialization as a woman. By looking at the development of male-female communication, readers can attain new insight into Jig’s personality as opposed to what they commonly perceive as weakness, and they can discover what she actually aims to achieve in her exchange with the American.

Gender differences affect communication between men and women; they affect people’s actions in daily life, like reading, writing, talking, and listening. And they surface within the professional and personal worlds of men and women. Such differences have emerged out of the displacement of women in society—they had been locked in their domestic station until the feminist movement.

Victorian and post-Reconstruction histories provide a context for understanding the cognitive aspects of female
behavior distinguished in later decades and recognizing how
women communicate with others and what is implicated in
their way of communicating. It was noted previously here
that after the acquisition of suffrage, many women argued
for "gender solidarity." But this is where the female
voice would be lost. Once steps were taken to successfully
gain women's rights, many women adopted the male point of
view and began to communicate like men, leaving the female
viewpoint underrepresented in some societal environments.
Throughout much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries,
women had been left without a distinct female voice
(Crawford and Chaffin 24-25).

Years later, rather than seeing women seeking the same
level of equality with men, researchers like Rhoda Unger
and Mary Crawford have explored gender differences in
communication, the distinction between men and women and
what it means for understanding female communication in
particular. In their book, Women and Gender: A Feminist
Psychology, they discuss images of women in society, women
and power, becoming gendered from childhood, and violence
against women. This research helped illustrate women's
standing in society, but it also explored women's
psychological reflections on and reactions to their standing and how it affected women's communication.

According to Deborah Tannen:

[M]ale-female conversation is cross-cultural communication. Culture, after all, is simply a network of habits and patterns based on past experience—and women and men have very different past experiences. (qtd. in Smiley 82)

Both Tannen and Unger and Crawford see the origin of gendered behavior rooted in history.

Because women have been oppressed in many ways, being forbidden at one time to hold office in government and vote, for example, they have developed a different nature from men. English and American societies had set limitations on women's roles, so women had to develop communication modes that would allow them to exert free will without consequences. Again, Sidonie Smith speculated on the marriage of self and society and a woman's place as "Other" within such a community. This marginalizing of a woman's place in society led her to develop her own communication method:

Rather than working logically, her mind works from the margins of logic: her way of knowing and
interpreting is less abstract, less integrative, less transcendent, less impartial, and less self-conscious than the interpretive mode of "metaphysical man." Inhabiting a domesticating space ... she exhibits a less authoritative 'feminine' mode of engagement with the world, one characterized as intuitive, irrational, particularistic, and practical. (Smith 81-82)

Michael Presnell explored gender stereotyping and origins of gender differences in communication in his essay "Narrative Gender Differences: Orality and Literacy." He states:

As in other areas of communication research, it is important that we do not assume that women and men perform and interpret narratives the same way. There is much evidence that women and men speak and write differently. (118-119)

Presnall cites the inclusion of the female point of view in communication studies as key to advancement in the research of women:

It has been effectively argued that women's communication tends to be ignored because it is not considered narrative. Researchers also have
suggested that the disregard of women's storytelling as a narrative form is partly responsible for the lack of research on women's experience in general. In the analysis of discourse, women's talk risks being described as "gossip" or "chit-chat" rather than "storytelling" or "narrative." For a discourse to be considered narrative, it must be perceived as providing connections between episodes of communicative expression. The connections between episodes of women's discourse tend to be trivialized, ignored, or invisible to researchers. (120-121)

Dismissal of women's oral communication as mere gossip reflects gender bias by the researcher, who has failed to recognize or understand women's communication process (Presnell 122). In her study of feminist myths, Sharona Ben-Tov warns that "gender stereotyping of human passions and activities limits what women can say about themselves and the meanings that we give to women's lives." She states, however, that author Carolyn Heilbrun "mentions that women's biographers are constantly aware of a basic,
hard-to-describe gap between being a woman and wanting to be something else" (135).

Moving away from gender biases requires the abandonment of what Unger and Crawford call androcentric, or male-centered, knowledge in psychological studies of men and women. Their examination of previous research has revealed that the findings were based on male points of view and have left out a particularly feminine perspective (2). In psychological studies, Unger and Crawford call for a way to correct the problem:

Because much of psychology's knowledge about women has historically been androcentric, one of the tasks of feminist psychology has been to deconstruct psychology by analyzing the implicit assumptions about women embedded in its theories and research practices. In this sense, feminist approaches can be viewed as providing oppositional knowledge. (17)

During psychological research, women's issues and concerns had been viewed as less important than men's had. Unger and Crawford propose the creation of new knowledge of women's psychology. They start with an exploration of gender development. In the first few years of life, people
develop a gender identity, knowledge of their sex and incorporating it into their personality. But it goes beyond that, as Unger and Crawford explain:

Moreover, internalizing sex and gender as part of personality goes beyond merely knowing that we are female or male. People also undergo gender typing, the process of developing traits and behaviors that mirror their society’s view of what is appropriate for a male or female and coming to hold these masculine/feminine traits and behaviors as part of one’s self-concept. (28)

Unger and Crawford hope to see society and research work toward their ideal theory of a woman, which should include the following: “view women positively and centrally,” more than just an afterthought in theory development; “encompass the diversity of women”; “remain close to the data of experience” in theory concepts; and “recognize that the inner world of the individual is intertwined with the external world of society” (29). Such principles—especially the latter, which would eliminate the decentralization of women as “Other”—are present in Hemingway’s fiction.
But the ideal theory still is a distant but hopeful concept in society. We need further research with a women’s perspective in mind before that ideal can be neared. The development of the Androgynous Personality, which carries masculine and feminine traits, has helped move us closer toward the ideal woman theory. Androgyny comes from the Greek roots andro (male) and gyn (female). The word has commonly been thought to relate to liberated women, sexual orientation, and sexual characteristics, but it refers to none of those. It refers instead to the balance or blending of masculinity and femininity. Unger and Crawford explain the androgynous personality:

[Researcher] Sandra Bem hypothesized that only androgynous people can draw upon both sets of characteristics and therefore they should be comfortable (and able to excel) in a wider variety of situations. (52)

This personality type leads the way toward a new understanding and view of woman and gender differences.

Gender differences in conversation do seem to be under new scrutiny. Due to further research, an undercurrent of refocused ideas based the recognition of what Smiley says are “paradigms are becoming less and less accurate as women
attain positions of power and people become more sensitive to language patterns" (83). In addition, what were once thought of as stereotypical male and female communication characteristics have proven false. For example, women have been assumed to talk over and interrupt men more than vice versa. However, studies of this issue have shown that the reverse is true; men interrupt women in more cases. In addition, the issue of conversational interruptions may not mean that the interrupter is trying to establish dominance, as previously thought.

Research in communication and psychology has been largely androcentric in that it fails to represent much of the female point of view. Carol Spitzack and Kathryn Carter note the misapprehension lies with the kind of research that was done: "The communication discipline in the past decade has critiqued the field's overreliance on quantitative empirical communication research" (18). In a 1983 issue of the Journal of Communication that attempted to find alternative research methods in the study of communication, an attempt to resolve the problem failed because of its lack a female point of view. Critics called it "a competitive male struggle for dominance" (qtd. in Spitzack & Carter, pg. 18). Viewing this as a larger
problem affecting the study of communication, Spitzack and Carter argue the issue more fairly: “Such disregard of feminist alternatives to research indicates the extent to which scholars have not noted the attendant correlations between gender and research conventions” (18-19).

Rhetorical theory also has largely neglected gender as a variable. Catherine A. Dobris worked to develop a rhetorical theory that accounted for gender. She touches on Robin Lakoff’s research of women and men’s verbal and nonverbal communication in order to extend her theory: the female manner of communicating is seen as less desirable than the male’s, but the male’s has been established as “ideal” with no account for the female’s (Dobris 138-139). Dobris’s research finds that the significance of women’s discourse has been devalued due to its commitment to feelings and emotions rather than specific goals. Coupled together, Dobris and Lakoff’s research illustrates the lack of importance placed on women’s distinct communication. Findings like these explain why critics of Hemingway like Catherine M. Rogers have seen his female characters as unfavorable: They have been placed in the context of male communication modes.
In *You Just Don’t Understand: Women and Men in Conversation*, Deborah Tannen describes the natures of men and women. Men focus on independence, while women focus on intimacy. She notes, “It is as if their lifeblood ran in different directions” (186). This idea supports the conception that men and women often can find themselves at odds while talking to one another because they simply do not understand the other’s conversational style. She uses her own experiences with her ex-husband as a foundation for exploring general communication breakdown:

One of the biggest troublemakers in our marriage was the seemingly innocent little question “Why?” Having grown up in a family in which explanations were offered as a matter of course, I was always asking my husband, “Why?” He had grown up in a family in which explanations were neither offered nor sought, so when I asked, “Why?,” he looked for hidden meaning—and concluded that I was questioning his decision and even his right to make it. My continually asking why seemed to him an effort to show him up as incompetent. Furthermore, not being accustomed to hearing people explain reasons for doing things, and not
having been called upon to explain his reasons in the past, he tended to act on instinct. So he really couldn’t have explained his reasons if he’d wanted to. (Tannen 23)

Simple differences in personality can have a huge effect on communication, especially when those differences are attributed to gender. This is why Smiley titles her essay "Gender-Linked Miscommunication" rather than "Gender-Linked Communication." In "Hills Like White Elephants," Jig and the American clearly have trouble making their feelings and aspirations known to each other. In addition, the girl and the man in "The Sea Change" and Marjorie and Nick in "The End of Something" also display difficulties in communication. Rather than judging each character by one communication standard, the interaction of the couple can be understood better when looking at the man and woman separately with regard to gender-specific modes of communication. While doing so may yield distinct patterns of male and female behaviors, looking at men and women’s communication separately also may give way to some gender stereotypes.

Tannen explored a series of stereotypes regarding women and men’s communication. She cites a joke in which a
woman is suing for divorce because her husband hasn’t spoken to her in two years, but the man says it’s because he didn’t want to interrupt her. The joke is a reflection of a gender stereotype:

This joke reflects the commonly held stereotype that women talk too much and interrupt men. On the other hand, one of the most widely cited findings to emerge from research on gender and language is that men interrupt women far more than women interrupt men. This finding is deeply satisfying insofar as it refutes the misogynistic stereotype and seems to account for the difficulty getting their voices heard that many women report having in interactions with men.

(Gender, Tannen 54-55)

Tannen also cites the work of Candace West and Don Zimmerman in addition to eleven more researchers who revealed that men interrupt women more often than women interrupt men, breaking that gender stereotype even further. For the West/Zimmerman study, “naturally occurring casual conversations” were recorded. In 96 percent of the interruptions recorded, men interrupted women (Gender 55).
However, Tannen shows that interruption is not always an obstructive conversational force. There are other ways interruption can be interpreted. Interrupting can be used in order to establish dominance, but it also can be seen as "cooperative overlapping." Tannen clarifies:

Everything that happens is the doing of all participants. For an interruption to occur, two speakers must act: One must begin speaking and another must stop. (Gender, Tannen 59, 62)

Men seeking dominance over a conversation with women is one of the problems men and women have in conversation. Tannen’s research also explores the issue of women using tag-end questions ("That’s a big dog, isn’t it?") and being indirect in their mode of communication:

... one cannot locate the source of domination, or of any interpersonal intention or effect, in linguistic strategies such as interruption, volubility, silence, and topic raising, as has been claimed. Similarly, one cannot locate the source of women’s powerlessness in such linguistic strategies as indirectness, taciturnity, silence, and tag questions, as has also been claimed ... . (Gender 21)
In addition, Robin Lakoff, like Tannen and Smiley, also pointed out that women use more tag questions at the end of statements than men. It may be that people just expect women to use more tag questions because they are female. Tannen explained that these expectations yield biases and stereotypes:

Many biases stem from this type of thinking. Men who did not provide support for their arguments were seen as more intelligent that women who did not; female infants crying were thought to be scared while male infants crying were judged as angry; and male professors who generated conversations in class were seen as competent, while the opposite was true for female professors. (You Just Don't Understand 226-228)

Gender stereotypes may compromise the way in which a man and a woman interpret each other's communication. Tannen notes that communication involves more than just speech; one cannot discover a person's intentions by merely studying his or her words:

... the "true" intention or motive of any utterance cannot be determined from examination of linguistic form alone. For one thing,
intentions and effects are not identical. For another, as the sociolinguistic literature has dramatized repeatedly ... human interaction is a "joint production": everything that occurs results from the interactions of all participants. The source of ambiguity and polysemy of linguistic strategies that I will explore here is the paradoxical relationship between the dynamics of power and solidarity.

(Gender 21)

It is important to remember the historical context to accompany sociolinguistic study; as Unger and Crawford discussed, women and men are gendered from childhood, and gendering stems back to the early limitations set on women. Women’s gender-specific modes of communication were born out of many years of subjugation of women. For example, studies of women’s indirectness correlate with their femaleness. When a woman needs someone to go to the store for her, she’ll make an indirect comment that implies this need. "Gee, I really need a few things from the store, but I’m so tired." A man who wishes to convey the same message is likely to say, "Will you please go to the store?"

Women’s longstanding subjugated position has been said to
have caused them to feel they don’t have the right to be direct (You Just Don’t Understand, Tannen 225).

The true nature of women is wrapped in several layers: Without proper research, it had been difficult to see their behavior as distinct, and taking a walk through their history reveals their difficulty in establishing an identity under oppressive androcentricity. The New Woman was an attempt to establish a new female identity. Looking at the female characters in Hemingway’s literature reveals distinct female identities born out of what the author may have been witnessing. At times, the women characters have been assessed without consideration for a distinct female mode of communication. The females’ behavior seen as weak actually is largely assertive behavior wrapped in a gender-specific mode of communication.

Hemingway conducts his own gender study in his short stories, reflected in the interactions—verbally and physically—between the male and female characters. Every communicative nuance echoes the author’s understanding of the intricacies of a type of female nature he must have seen in the early twentieth century. Hemingway has been seen to write largely autobiographically—“blurring finally the lines between fiction and non-fiction” (Barlowe-Kayes
Therefore, his representations of the women can be viewed as depictions based on largely veracious material. Hemingway could be seen as an astute observer-reporter of male-female interactions.

Rena Sanderson explored gender issues in Hemingway's works and found that early feminist criticism "unquestionably diminished his literary reputation in some academic circles." But with further study, she notes:

"[R]ereadings have given new visibility to Hemingway's female characters (and their strengths) and have revealed his own sensitivity to gender issues, thus casting doubts on the old assumption that his writings were one-sidedly masculine. (171)"

According to Pamela Smiley, in "Hills Like White Elephants," Jig and the American display "several characteristics of gender-marked speech." Jig's reactions to her lover are explained in large part through gender conditioning. She cites the fact that "[t]he man insists on the 'facts' and 'proof' while Jig talks of fantasies, emotions, and impressions" (83). In addition, Jig uses more tag-end questions. Actually, Jig asks more than three
times as many questions in general than the man does.

Smiley notes:

Women's language uses more tag-end questions than does men's. The advantages of tag-end questions are that a speaker can invite contributions, avoid commitment, and effect consensus. The disadvantage is that the speaker seems to lack self-confidence and authority. (86)

This is likely where many readers get the impression that Jig is meek and dominated when, in fact, she is working to achieve consensus in the conversation with the American. Smiley believes Jig achieves the opposite, increasing distance between her and the man with her questions. But his answers, not Jig's questions, actually increase the distance. Jig never waivers from her agenda to keep both the man and the baby. His agenda is for Jig to have the abortion. Each of Jig's questions serves to lead the man to adopt another perspective. Characterizing Jig can be a difficult undertaking unless both the male and female method of communication is considered, as Smiley discussed:

Evaluating Jig from the standard of women's language, it is clear that she is trying to do just those things: to lead the American into an
admission that he is committed to her and desires a fuller life than they now lead. Evaluating Jig from the standard of the male language, she is indirect and coercive and therefore superficial and manipulative. (86)

However, if readers view Jig in such a light, then the American will have to be judged accordingly. He, too, hopes to lead his lover to agree with his wishes without plainly stating what they are. Her most genuine question—that is, the one that doesn't have an underlying motive—comes when she reveals what her ultimate decision will be: "Doesn't it mean anything to you? We could get along" (HLWE 214). Spoken more plainly, she might say, "I want to keep the baby." The man reverts back to his own agenda: "But I don't want anybody but you. I don't want anyone else. And I know it's perfectly simple" (214). Translated, "I don't want a baby."

With separate agendas, the man and the woman must utilize their own gender-specific communication methods in order to achieve the desired results. Smiley notes that with women relegated to the position of "Other," their language and communication "are devalued in comparison to their male counterparts" (83). Therefore, to convince the
American to adopt her position, Jig reverts to the
conventions set by society for her gender. One of these
conventions is to remain refined, not overly aggressive.
At points when Jig should be most upset, she remains
neutrally silent. One instance that Smiley notes is when
Jig smiles at the American as he prepares for the arrival
of the train:

... it should be noted that she has used a
variety of language skills in her confrontation
with the American: she has been metaphorical,
amusing, self-sacrificing, sarcastic, direct—and
none has worked. No matter which tack she
chooses, the American comes back at her with the
same two sentences: “I think you should do it”
and “I don’t want you to do anything you don’t
want to do.” According to [Dan] Dietrich, even
though traditional female language is generally
more skillful and creative than traditional male
language, because his is more authoritative, and
powerful, the male’s best effects submission.
Since our society values authority and power, the
inevitable result of the American’s repetition is
Jig’s silent smile. (91)
Jig has been forced to silence, which veils an ulterior motive: Her silence reflects her giving up on convincing the American to see things her way, but it does not reflect her giving in to the abortion.

Jig’s silence reflects the moments when she is in opposition to the man: "'It's really an awfully simple operation, Jig. It's really not anything. It's just to let the air in'" (212). Her reaction is to "not say anything." Because of her gendered behavior—Smiley notes that "politeness is a distinctive characteristic of women's speech, a facet of their role of making others feel at ease by decreasing distance and showing a lack of hostility" (91)—she will not display her opposition outwardly. However, in Hemingway’s era, the traditional behavior for a woman was changing into a New Woman’s perspective.

Sanderson points to Hemingway’s Brett Ashley as "a transitional figure between the protected, idealized wife and the modern, self-reliant woman" (179). Jig mixes the expected politeness of a woman with the assertiveness traditionally reserved for a man, as seen when she resists his insistence that they can have everything if she has the abortion. She does not recoil; she continually retorts in the negative, proving to him that she has pondered the
issue well enough to know that it will change their relationship forever if she has the operation. Therefore, in her new station, Jig must find a way to communicate her wishes without totally isolating herself from the man. Consequently, critics finding Jig manipulative and indirect misrepresent her words and actions, which will prove to be rooted in irony to avoid distancing the man but also to sidestep the abortion.

Many readers lose their way to finding Jig’s strength because they may fuse it to a man’s mode of communication. In this light, Jig is seen as submissive: “‘And if I do it you’ll be happy and things will be like they were and you’ll love me?’”; “‘If I do it you won’t ever worry?’”; “‘Then I’ll do it. Because I don’t care about me’” (HLWE 213). But looking at these statements not from a man’s perspective but from a woman’s perspective affords the reader insight that might otherwise be overlooked. Instead of understanding these statements as being practical and transcendent, to use Smith’s words, one can adopt a more ‘feminine’ way of looking at them and intuit Jig’s intentions. According to Smiley:

While Jig may be totally sincere, not caring about herself and having only the American’s
interests at heart, such total devotion is highly unlikely; it is more likely that she is well-taught in the skills of social deference. (89)

However, I would add that such learned deference is coupled with the freedom of the New Woman, and each is at odds with the other in Jig; she wants to remain polite, like the girl in "The Sea Change," while being assertive, suggesting that Jig's gendered behavior is even more complex than the man's.

Seeing Jig's behavior as gendered offers a way to see deeper into her character to find the strength within her. Smiley, discussing Jig and the American's gender differences, was able to show Jig's self-determination. However, Hannum found that "[m]ost readings of the story to date have seen both the girl's character and the episode itself as essentially static, with the girl finally agreeing to the abortion, to retain her lover" (par. 5). This may be due to a misunderstanding of female gender. Traditionally, men have been viewed as aggressive, self-reliant, and dominant while women have been seen as yielding, nurturing, and emotional (Unger and Crawford 28). Jig and the American occupy opposite ends of the gender spectrum. However, Jig aims to move toward the middle,
trying to exercise her new station by not giving in to the American’s wishes and allowing him to dominate the situation and taking time to avoid a purely emotional response to it.

A joining together of genders bears the androgynous personality that Unger and Crawford discussed. Many studies of one of Hemingway’s last works, “The Garden of Eden,” have led critics like J. Gerald Kennedy and Mark Spilka to look at the author’s use of androgyny. Hints of Hemingway’s interest in the subject can be found in earlier works; many of his female characters had characteristics generally seen in males at the time such as short hair, like the girl in “The Sea Change” or Brett in The Sun Also Rises. Hemingway recognized a blurring of masculine and feminine roles that was taking place in the early twentieth century.

Studies of such issues offer insight into Hemingway’s female characters, who actually display characteristics of the New Woman more than previously thought. To further solidify this point, a study of “The Snows of Kilimanjaro” exposing the depth of Helen’s character is needed. The previous discussions of women’s
history, feminist criticism, and gendered behavior will enter this final discussion.
CHAPTER FOUR
HELEN: THE SURVIVOR

Ernest Hemingway has been recognized often for his sparse, economical way of writing. Due to his style, a hasty reader may underestimate the depth of the female characters. However, as the previous discussion illustrates, readers can discover more about the female characters than previously thought. Seemingly simple words, phrases, and sentences in the exposition and dialogue disclose feelings and emotions of both the male and female characters. At times, some of Jig's dialogue in "Hills Like White Elephants" can betray an honest reading of her sense of irony. In "The End of Something," Marjorie is more directly empowering through her actions, as when she rows herself away immediately upon hearing a negative answer to her question, "Isn't love any fun?" And the girl in "The Sea Change" interjects a tone of self-determination throughout the story.

The triumphs of Marjorie, Jig, the girl, and Helen in "The Snows of Kilimanjaro" become evident when readers consider their gender-specific modes of communication and weigh their challenges. In order to negotiate these
intellectual tasks, it is important to read the text closely and carefully to expose their victories of female personage. In "Snows," it also is especially important to weigh them against the failures of the male character, Harry.

Many writers have studied and discussed Hemingway's prose style: E. Nageswara Rao in *Ernest Hemingway: A Study of Rhetoric* and Harry Levin's essay "Observations on the Style of Ernest Hemingway" in *Hemingway: A Collection of Critical Essays* name a few of these authors. Hemingway's economical prose style conveys a great deal about the characters with just a few words. Readers can decipher truth within the characters from not only his sparse description and dialogue but also from their actions, all of which have a strong base in reality. In a study of Hemingway's rhetoric, Rao found that the author's "experiments in style [were] undertaken in order to transmit his vision of reality without exaggeration or falsification" (11). Thus the strengths of the female characters must have been based in what Hemingway saw taking place in the early twentieth century. Looking at "The End of Something," Rao notices that Hemingway acts as reporter-observer, or "recorder" of scenes:
Hemingway does not try to analyse the break-up of this affair, nor does he attempt to speculate on the possible reasons for it. He faithfully records the scene of action, the deeds of the characters, and the few words they exchange. (50)

Developing characters based on his observations, Hemingway captured the New Woman in the dialogue and actions of his female characters. According to biographer Scott Donaldson, Helen in "The Snows of Kilimanjaro" was based on Hemingway's second wife, Pauline: "The closest approximation to Pauline in his fiction ... is Helen in 'The Snows of Kilimanjaro'" (163). Of Pauline, Hemingway wrote: "Take as good a woman as Pauline—a hell of a wonderful woman—and once she turns mean. Although, of course, it is your own actions that turn her mean. Mine I mean" (qtd. in Sanderson 185). Helen's strengths may prove to be a reflection of Pauline, a twentieth century woman who must have recognized and embraced the emergence of the New Woman. Hemingway wrote his stories with the intention of staying close to a true, realistic depiction of people and their environments, all their intricate interrelations recognized.
While much of the dialogue in "Snows" discloses what may be perceived as Helen’s weakness in her relationship with Harry, her actions display her as the antithesis of a subjugated woman. Furthermore, when considering the circumstances and the setting in the story, Helen’s words convey strength in adversity. The woman’s strength can be found in both her actions and her words. For example, one of Helen’s actions is to shoot game: "‘I shot a Tommy ram,’ she told him" (SK 46). Another is to stay close to and take care of her lover, who is dying from gangrene, even when he treats her with disrespect and rudeness. Each time he awakens from his dreams, he finds her sitting next to him "on a canvas chair beside his cot" (SK 40, 43, and 54).

Readers might not be able to find Helen’s strength because she takes much verbal abuse from Harry. However, she does so because he is dying, and she knows that he would not act in such a way toward her if he wasn’t. Helen asserts herself as best she can considering the circumstances.

The story opens in medias res. Within the first three lines, the man’s sarcastic demeanor and Helen’s seemingly timid one are revealed. When he mockingly apologizes for the odor from the gangrene she says, “Don’t! Please don’t,”
a statement that starts out as aggressive but quickly is corrected with the addition of "please." Harry's crisis must be dealt with delicately; Helen loves Harry and can see the severity of the situation, but he cannot see beyond his bitterness at the turn his life had taken.

For the most part, he torments her while she tries to keep things polite and make light of the circumstances. Helen tries to make Harry believe he will be rescued. Unlike Harry, Helen does not believe, or does not want to believe, that he is dying. She often talks of a rescue truck or plane coming soon, she does not want Harry to drink alcohol because it would worsen his condition, and she tells him, "'You can't die if you don't give up'" (SK 40). Coupled with her anxiousness about the situation and Harry's negativity, Helen easily could be overwrought, but she remains strong and restrained: "She was looking at him, holding the glass and biting her lip" (SK 41).

To remain positive in the worst circumstance in order to install in Harry the idea not to give up is difficult for Helen. Now that Harry is dying, Helen feels out of her element in Africa; she would have been much more comfortable in Europe, which is evident when she says she wishes she and Harry had gone to Paris or Hungary (41).
She knows she must remain strong for Harry, but it is a challenge, as seen in her dialogue: "'It's that I've gotten so very nervous not being able to do anything,'" and "'Please tell me what I can do. There must be something I can do'" (SK 39). Readers might see Helen as weak here. In addition, her words remain somewhat subdued due to her high-society social status, reflected in her being on the cover of popular magazines for the wealthy like Town & Country (SK 49). Harry remarked on the fact that "she was very pleasant and appreciative" and "she never made scenes" (46). Again, readers might these facts as weaknesses in her character. However, when Harry says he wants to quarrel to make the time pass, Helen’s assertiveness comes to light: "'I don't quarrel. I never want to quarrel. Let's not quarrel any more. No matter how nervous we get'" (40). Statements like these offer insight into Helen's strength. But they can be overlooked because of the conflict within Harry.

While Helen’s objective is to stay pleasant and positive and nurse Harry until help arrives, Harry’s objective is to die peacefully, which requires that he exorcise his regrets. In many of his works, Hemingway places an unhappy main character at their center and
focuses on an unmet potential, lost cause, or missed opportunity. In "Snows," Harry’s lifetime of disappointment, unhappiness, and regret makes him a disagreeable lover to Helen. His unhappiness is at the helm of the story, and he does not have the will to improve his situation. He lies afflicted with gangrene, knowing that he will die from it. Helen does not want to hear him talk of death, but she must contend with the situation as it is.

She tries to focus on positive points like the nice breeze, while Harry struggles with his doom:

"Wouldn’t you like me to read?" she asked.
She was sitting on a canvas chair beside his cot.
"There’s a breeze coming up."
"No thanks."
"Maybe the truck will come."
"I don’t give a damn about the truck."
"I do."
"You give a damn about so many things that I don’t."

"Not so many, Harry." (SK 40)

The last two utterances allow readers to detect a few vital things about the relationship. The two words "so
many" means that Harry is referring to situations from the past in addition to the present situation. They suggest that he has known her for some time, and he has kept a mental list of their differences, likes and dislikes, what they care about and don’t care about. With those two words, Hemingway has established a motive for Harry’s malcontent with the woman—she doesn’t care about the things he cares about, and vice versa.

However, Helen reminds him that she supported his interests: “You liked to do so many things and everything you wanted to do I did” (SK 43). She allowed herself to become involved in his interests and passions in order to give them common ground upon which to establish their relationship, but the things they did together took him away from writing. Now that he is dying, Helen would have preferred to stay home anyway: “You never would have gotten anything like this in Paris. You always said you loved Paris. We could have stayed in Paris or gone anywhere. I’d have gone anywhere.” Although she admits to loving Africa as well—“I’ve loved Africa. Really. If you’re all right it’s the most fun that I’ve ever had” (46)—the crisis has made her regret coming, especially because he has become belligerent and offensive.
With her taking verbal abuse and saying she'd go anywhere he wished, it certainly would seem as though she is subjugated by him. Yet, looking at Harry's contentions for his regrets shows another side to the argument: He believes her wealth has squelched his ability to write, and he reveals this fact when he says, "Your bloody money." He also says, "Your damned money was my armour. My Swift and my Armour" (SK 41, 43). He possibly refers to the meat-packing company, Swift-Armour, because he feels that he is "dead meat," and Helen is the meat-packer. If it weren't for her money, he thinks he would have had more time to write. While she does whatever and goes wherever he wishes, the truth is that her money licenses her to maintain control of the relationship, as Rena Sanderson points out:

Green Hills of Africa already introduced as a minor, veiled theme the conflicts between powerful women and their impotent, bitter men, conflicts that Hemingway depicted more fully in two short stories, 'The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber' and 'The Snows of Kilimanjaro.' In both stories the husband perceives the woman to be in charge and resents her for it. (184)
Harry has been seduced by money, and he believes Helen has led him away from his dreams with it. He tells himself several times that "he never wrote the things he had saved to write." Tension in the relationship comes from this fact. Harry makes Helen his scapegoat; he can blame her for keeping him from writing, making her his enemy:

"Don't pay any attention, darling, to what I say. I love you, really. You know I love you. I've never loved any one else the way I love you."

He slipped into the familiar lie he made his bread and butter by.

"You're sweet to me."

"You bitch," he said. "You rich bitch. That's poetry. I'm full of poetry now. Rot and poetry. Rotten poetry." (SK 43)

Harry needs someone to blame. He is dying with regrets. He sees death as his punishment for coveting money and abandoning his writing. Consequently, he treats Helen cruelly because she has the upper hand and because he believed her money had made him destroy himself. While thinking to himself, he refers to her as "destroyer of his talent." Then he has a silent epiphany from which he
quickly retracts the thought and admits that he had destroyed his own talent:

He had destroyed his talent by not using it, by betrayals of himself and what he believed in, by drinking so much that it blunted the edge of his perceptions, by laziness, by sloth and by snobbery. (SK 45)

After realizing this fact, Harry changes the way he communicates with Helen; he suppresses his invidious behavior toward her after this realization, which allows Helen's strength to be more visible. However, the complexity of their relationship must still be considered in order to understand further Helen's nature.

The complex characters have a history that goes beyond their immediate dialogue; the reader must account for this history in order to find more than a disagreeable man and his meek, helpless lover. The history helps unlock the complexity of their relationship and their personalities. Charles Nolan recognized that an accurate understanding of this short story requires more than just surface interpretations of dialogue:

The much discussed 'The Snows of Kilimanjaro' (1936), one of Hemingway's best stories, is often
read as dramatizing the evil inherent in a writer’s marrying money. His wife’s wealth, the argument goes, makes Harry soft, and, as a result, he never fulfills his promise. But such a pat interpretation is true neither to the complexity of the story nor to the portrait of Helen, Harry’s wife, in it. (214)

The complexity, then, must be drawn out. When deciphering Helen’s personality, readers must consider her past, her status, her love for Harry, and Harry’s regret and present condition. Unfolding Helen’s nature is possible only when simultaneously unfolding Harry’s because their interactions relay more realism than an analysis of each individual would.

In order to get a clear picture of Harry, Hemingway employs a grand technique to display Harry’s past. His past is important because it contains the things he wished he’d written about, which, in turn, he failed to do and blames Helen for distracting him and treats her badly. His poor treatment of Helen is the core reason many readers see her as weak. Therefore, an exploration of Harry’s past and failure to write about it is necessary.
Hemingway's technique to display his past is to break up the narrative with exposition set in italics, which critics label flashbacks or dreams. Within this text, he allows Harry to relive his past in his dreams—Harry uses all his senses in these reflections, showing that perhaps those were the only times when he was truly happily alive:

How many winters had he lived in the Vorarlberg and the Arlberg? It was four and then he remembered the man who had the fox to sell when they had walked into Bludenz, that time to buy presents, and the cherry-pit taste of good kirsch, the fast-slipping rush of running powder-snow on crust, singing 'Hi! Ho! Said Rolly!' as you ran down the last stretch to the steep drop, taking it straight, then running the orchard in three turns and out across the ditch and onto the icy road behind the inn. Knocking your bindings loose, kicking the skis free and leaning them up against the wooden wall of the inn, the lamplight coming from the window, where inside, in the smoky, new-wine smelling warmth, they were playing the accordion. (SK 42-43)
Harry remembers such minute details in his dreams, such as why he and his companions went into Bludenz, what the kirsch tasted like, what material the wall of the inn was made of, and what type of music was playing there. When he speaks while he is awake, he seems groggy, even confused. In his dreams, however, he is articulate and precise. In each dream, he says these are the things about which he had planned to write, which explains why he remembers them so well. He had them locked in his mind for so long that they were easily accessible from his memory. Because of the incredible detail and lengthy sentences (in the above passage, there are three sentences: the first is 12 words long, the second 82, and the third 39), Hemingway shows how vital these images are to Harry, how much they mean to the now dying man, and how utterly unfulfilled he is by never having written them out. Even within the dream Harry says, "When there was no snow you gambled and when there was too much you gambled. He thought of all the time in his life he had spent gambling." Harry reflects on how he wasted time gambling instead of writing.

As shown previously, the dialogue is mostly negative before Harry realizes that he is responsible for destroying his own talent. For example, in one section of the story,
the author uses words like "dreadful," "bastard," "destroy," "pain," "discomfort," "cruel," "unjust," "die," "evil-smelling," "emptiness," "odd," "quarrelling," "corrosion," "killed," and "wore out" (SK 47, 48). Hemingway does not apply positive, bright, and light language to Harry because he wants to show that a life full of regrets cut short is serious business. In more than three different places Harry remembers that because he is dying he would "never write the things he wanted to write": stories, novels, and the like. Hemingway uses negative language more than positive to reflect the tragedy. He makes Harry especially disagreeable and used the above words to reflect Harry's realization that he has destroyed his own talent and that he truly is going to die without fulfilling his dreams.

Certainly, Harry had blamed Helen for his failure to write before he recognized that it actually was his own self-destruction. After his dream, he awakens to find her sitting near him, and he immediately starts arguing with her: "Love is a dunghill ... and I'm the cock that gets to crow on it." After waiting by his side every day since he scratched his leg and the gangrene started, she knows she has not earned such abuse. She refutes it, but delicately
for fear if he died she would regret treating him badly: "If you have to go away," she said, "is it absolutely necessary to kill off everything you leave behind? I mean do you have to take away everything?" (SK 43). Statements such as these convey her ability to think and act like a New Woman. But like the female characters in the other short stories mentioned, Helen cannot simply adopt the New Woman persona: She must assimilate it into the female behavior that society expected prior to its development. And she must contend with her past and her status as well when adopting the New Woman.

Regarding her past, Helen has dealt with death before; not only had she already lost a husband when she was younger, she also suffered through one of her children dying in a plane crash (SK 45-46). As Nolan explains, "Far from being a mere 'rich bitch,' Helen is a good woman who has suffered her share of earthly calamity" (215). To ease the pain of losing her husband, Helen became dependent on alcohol; then she became dependent on taking lovers, but they proved an insufficient substitute for her exciting husband. After the death of her child, neither the lovers nor the drink would ease the pain, so she had to find some
other means to a revivification. That means was Harry, whom she learned to love after he eased her loneliness.

Both Nolan and Sanderson believe Hemingway had purposely directed the reader’s sympathy toward Helen: “Badly used, Helen has just claim on our sympathies” (Nolan 216). Perhaps he wished to reflect what a “good woman” Pauline was through Helen, who was strong enough to take the abuse of a dying man and who refused to give up taking care of him, persisting in nursing his condition. In one passage, Harry provides a bit more insight into her personality: “She loved anything that was exciting, that involved a change of scene, where there were new people and where things were pleasant” (SK 44-45).

Dealing with Harry’s mental and physical suffering, Helen tries to remain pleasant to a point. In some instances, she fights back: “I don’t want to move,”” the man said. “There’s no sense in moving now except to make it easier for you.” Helen responds with, “That’s cowardly.” The instance where he calls her a rich bitch, she says, “Stop it. Harry, why do you have to turn into a devil now?” (SK 43). As awful as he is, she can only assert herself so far; it is difficult to be cruel to the sick, and she imagines what regrets she would have if he
died. Finding the source of Helen's strength as a woman comes from understanding her past and reflecting on how she deals with the present.

Part of Helen's past is revealed in the dream she has near the end of the story. In the dream, an important event in her daughter's life is marred by the rude behavior of her father. This provides further insight into why she can tolerate Harry's behavior: She has had practice dealing with it. But more importantly, in this final passage Hemingway ends the story with the beating of Helen's heart (SK 56). Suggestive of her good nature and ability to love, the beating of her heart also reflects survival; after losing now three important men in her life, Helen lives on, but she is once again alone. Dealing with Harry's misery and self-loathing was a bargain for Helen to deal with compared to her being alone again.

Wrapped in seemingly sparse language are compelling, moving, and thought-provoking characters in "Snows." Readers can appreciate the complexity of the characters when accounting for their pasts and applying them to the crisis: Harry dying from gangrene. Refusing to accept that fact, Helen does her best to stay positive for him. That
coupled with her ability to survive this and other crises proves Helen's strength.

When I first read "The Snows of Kilimanjaro," Hemingway's ability to characterize human emotions overshadowed his misogynistic reputation. Exploring the origins of this reputation, I discovered that the reputation was established at a time when men desired a machismo image in society. After reading several novels and more of Hemingway's short stories, I discovered the antithesis of misogyny and found his female characters to have great strength, actually embodying what was coming to be known as the New Woman of the 1920s. The feminist work of nineteenth-century women was benefiting women during the time Hemingway published many of his short stories. He recognized a strong female who struggled to adopt a new station while embodying that of her own gender. Hemingway captured the women's movement in his female characters and they are immortalized within the text.
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