

The Artificial Incompleteness of Lady Brett Ashley: Magnifying One Modality of Hemingway's Artistry in *The Sun Also Rises*

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I. Insights from the Critical Reception

Ernest Hemingway's first novel, *The Sun Also Rises* (hereafter noted as *SAR*), published in 1926, is one of the most controversial novels in his canon of work. The 2011 publication of the book *The Critical Reception of Hemingway's The Sun Also Rises*, was the first book to ever compile all studies on Hemingway in a comprehensive history of *SAR*'s critical reception. The book's author, Peter L. Hayes, a prominent Hemingway scholar, covers, in this 345 pages book, 576 articles and books of critical opinions ranging from the 1920s to 2011. He exhibits the vast number of many critics who gravitated to discuss their own problems and cultural concerns of their specific times all seen through the lens of *SAR*. While no other comprehensive history of critical reception has been introduced for other Hemingway works, we can assume that *SAR* involves a deep-rooted controversial nature within its text.

Controversy over *SAR* seems to arrive not so much from the interpretation of the narrative, but from the difficulty in identifying the characters. Although the book is largely identified as a novel of the Lost Generation, essentially a story on the decadent post-WWI expatriates living on the Left Bank of Paris, such labeling¹ of the novel does not wholly collect the traits of the book's characters nor does it make sense of their disparate anecdotes. James Nagel, an influential Hemingway critic, once said, "*The Sun Also Rises* is much more a novel of a character than of event, and the action would seem empty were it not for the rich texture of personalities that interact through the book" (90), and suggested that the heart of *SAR* depends on the depiction and relationships of characters and not so much on the narrative itself. While character analysis is necessary, what makes this novel fundamentally difficult to pin

down is the narrator Jakes Barnes, a protagonist who was made impotent by WWI. The characters are described only through the memory of Jake with minimum description, in past tense, and at times with great bias. It has been understood that in *SAR*, the art of the narrator makes it difficult to identify the characters.²

Moreover, what makes *SAR* even more difficult is perhaps the interpretation of Brett Ashley, the conspicuously beautiful “alcoholic aristocrat” (Bloom 1), and a goddess who “turns men into swine” (*SAR* 148) and who is in love with Jake. Kathy G. Willingham, a notable female Hemingway scholar, mentions that while the publication of *The Garden of Eden* in 1986 elaborated deeper psycho-sexual dimensions embedded in Hemingway’s text, it has brought particular relevance to Brett Ashley. She writes, “[o]f [Hemingway’s] many characters, specifically females, she has provoked the most disagreement, controversy, and, perhaps, interest, as evidenced by her inclusion in Harold Bloom’s prestigious series, *Major Literary Characters*” (Willingham 33).³ The inclusion of Brett in Bloom’s series connotes that she represents the most vivid and living female character in Hemingway literature, despite the fact that interpretations of her character yet yield heavy disagreement. Harold Bloom’s understanding of Brett is a further indicative of her importance: “Whose novel is it anyway? Take Brett out of it, and vitality would depart” (2). As Bloom understands, the difficulty of *SAR* rests on the influence of Brett’s controversy as she ironically possesses both disagreement and importance at the same time.

However, although there is an agreement on Brett’s role as the hinge of the novel, it is clear through the history of critical reception that Brett’s true nature has been largely ignored; she has been largely cast aside with scathing descriptions such as a “nymphomaniac” (Tate 43), a “woman devoid of womanhood” (Bardacke 309), or a woman who “never becomes a woman really” (Fiedler 319). It is clear that critics throughout history have neglected to pay attention to her real traits regardless of her importance in the novel. Linda Patterson Miller, one of the early female Hemingway scholars, writes:

Since the publication of *The Sun Also Rises* in 1926, readers and critics have derogated Brett Ashley as Hemingway's ultimate bitch. Whether labeling her a drunkard, a nymphomaniac, or modern-day Circe who turns men into swine, these interpretations ignore the complexity of Brett's character and the intricate role she plays in the novel" (296).

Miller points to the most important question with regards to Brett: unless we understand Brett, we will never understand the controversy within *SAR*. In fact, Jackson J. Benson, an influential Hemingway critic also mentions that "Lady Brett . . . is not only the center of the conflict but the central character in the novel" (80).

There is a fundamental question we must ask: why did such ambiguity about Brett ever occur in the first place? While modern readers may recognize that Brett's licentious nature made her into a social threat and an anti-role model of the novel's historical time, it is highly interesting to see why the critics came to hold such contradicting view. Should we as readers understand Brett according to "the critics of the Brett-the-bitch school" (Whitlow 51) that she was a "nymphomaniac" (Tate 43) or a "pathetic brave figure" (Cowley 25) or a "compulsive bitch" (Aldridge 24)? It is difficult to accept these biased expressions within our twenty first century definitions of these words. However, if we contemplate for a moment what has caused such expressions to emerge, they take on new relevancy. What if we, critics included, were never even able to wholly interpret Brett from the beginning due to the rhetorical settings of Hemingway's technique? What if we were implicitly and secretly informed of importance through fragmentized images? Can we find any evidence that the emergence of "the critics of the Brett-the-bitch school" (Whitlow 51) correlates with Hemingway's artistry? To specifically assume premises and to answer such questions, perhaps we need to examine Hemingway's artistry much further.

In this paper, I will pay special attention to Hemingway's artistry with reference to its portrayal of Brett's importance and the derogation directed towards her. The critical history shows that the arguments over Brett's identification

and redemption mainly takes place within the thematic domain such as through reading signs and motifs regarding Brett. In fact, it is much more defensible to overturn the former understanding of Brett through a thematic and historical approach as both reflect our developmental transformation of our epistemology. Not to mention, it is more rational to build arguments through these domains of themes and history rather than to develop a theory based on Hemingway's all-too-common modernist writing technique, the "principle of iceberg"⁴ that only aims to show one-eighths of the object. However, since one cannot confirm many criticisms that focus on Hemingway's writing technique, except in very few early criticisms, it is more meaningful to focus on Hemingway's artistry within *SAR*. I will first confirm Hemingway's rhetorical setting with regards to Brett Ashley and will then examine briefly how she was doomed to be a controversial character from the opening of the novel. Secondly, I would like to elaborate Hemingway's artistry with regards to Brett, and explain such artistry in my own terms.

II. Fitzgerald's Friendly Gesture Towards Brett Ashley

Hemingway's women have been under heavy attack for over a half-century. Historically, it has been generally understood that women in Hemingway's works such as Marjorie in "The End of Something," George's wife in "Cat in The Rain," the wife in "Hills Like White Elephants," Catherine Barkley in *Farewell to Arms*, Mary Morgan in *To Have and Have Not*, Maria in *Farewell to Arms*, Renata in *Across the River and Into the Trees*, etc., are all too compliant and docile,⁵ and that omission of their complicated characteristics only promotes debasement toward women. However, if one understands fully what Hemingway's artistry was, one begins to understand that "seven-eighths of the iceberg" is under water. Although these characters have been criticized heavily for their docile behavior allowing men to manipulate them, many readers do not struggle to find what Hemingway does not mention. Miller nobly explains that, "what I see predominantly, though, is a woman in love."⁽¹⁰⁾ As Miller suggests, Hemingway readers can completely overlook the concealed possibili-

ties below water and naively begin in vain criticizing characters in love.

It is commonly understood that Lady Brett Ashley was meant to be concealed. It was F. Scott Fitzgerald who advised Hemingway to conceal Brett. Only after Hemingway received the galley proofs, in 1925, did he send it off to Fitzgerald for revision.⁶ Fitzgerald read the final draft in carbon copy and suggested changes, which made Hemingway eliminate “the first one and one-half chapters of the type script draft, approximately thirty-five hundred words” (Svoboda 98). The eliminated chapters were descriptions on Brett Ashley’s background. Hemingway’s final draft began with Brett:

This is a novel about a lady. Her name is Lady Ashley and when the story begins she is living in Paris and it is Spring. That should be a good setting for a romantic but highly moral story. As every one knows, Paris is a very romantic place. Spring in Paris is a very happy and romantic time. Autumn in Paris, although very beautiful, might give a note of sadness or melancholy that we shall try to keep out of his story.

(qtd. in Svoboda 13)

This eliminated manuscript clearly exhibits Hemingway’s intention of Brett’s centrality in the novel. Fitzgerald commented to Hemingway that:

When so many people can write well + the competition is so heavy I can’t imagine how you could have done these 20 pps. so casually. You can play with peoples [*sic*] attention— a good man who has the power of arresting attention at will must be especially careful . . . I began to like the novel but Ernest I can’t tell you the sense of disappointment that beginning with its elephantine facetiousness gave me.”

(qtd. in Svoboda 139)

Hemingway bought Fitzgerald’s argument and cut the introduction that explicated Lady Brett Ashley. Although Fitzgerald’s letter sounds rather unsparing, it is almost startling to find how he shared his aesthetic inspiration

with Hemingway when he exclaims in excitement in the letter, “I go crazy when people aren’t at their best . . . [Jake Barnes] isn’t like an impotent man. He’s like a man in a sort of moral chastity belt.”(qtd. in Svoboda 140)

Fitzgerald’s commentary represents the core of Hemingway’s artistry of Brett Ashley. It explains how excellence can be attained by artificial incompleteness. This is similar to the description of Jake Barnes as a man wearing a chastity belt, a description which casts him as a mysterious impotent man. It is not very common to see a man being muscular and at the same time impotent. In contrast, if Jake did not simultaneously possess masculinity and impotence, then the romance between Brett would not hold. However, what makes it so marvelous is that though Jake needs Brett so badly as a man, he can never consummate his love to her as a man, just like Dante could not have Beatrice in the *The Inferno*. It makes for eternal invalidation of romance between the two of them, and arrests both Jake and Brett in the impossibility of consummation. What is most importantly implied in Fitzgerald’s letter is that unless Hemingway eliminates the introduction, Brett would never acquire such eternity but instead obtain “elephantine facetiousness” (140) which would kill its solemnity, a characteristic only made possible by artificial incompleteness. It is true that Hemingway omitted the beginning of the novel and cut the “elephantine” part as suggested; however, he did not simply omit traits of Brett in the novel, but rather maneuvered further to confuse the reader’s recognition and reasoning. Hemingway’s artistry with regards to Brett lies on such maneuvering that does not allow the reader to find a normative center both with regards to the novel and Brett. By eliminating the redundant and heavy facetiousness that fill the gaps, Hemingway’s artistry attains an eternal incompleteness which will never make Brett a fully comprehensible character. In other words, she can never be redeemed more than she already is in the novel.

III Brett Ashley in Hemingway’s Artistry

In what kind of incompleteness is Brett confined? Essentially, the only way one can look at Brett Ashley is through the artistry of Hemingway since Brett

is integrated into the complex structure of such artificial incompleteness. First of all, Brett is seen only through the eyes of Jake Barnes, the male protagonist of the novel. Although Jake functions as a focal point who controls all information about Brett, Jake doesn't loquaciously "explain" Brett, but only provides the reader fragmentary reactions through his vision. Hence, readers must collect information on Brett vis-a-vis Jake's dialogue or his sensual reaction, or movements in perspective, or internal monologue, or indirect suggestiveness, directed to her, while building images of Brett through minimal information. In other words, we can understand Brett only indirectly. In such cases, Jake becomes the moral axis of the novel to which the readers can assimilate themselves, while having an irreconcilable muscular and impotent duality inside him. Having many filters toward our understanding of Brett, makes it even more difficult to complete a full picture of her. Robert Lamb, a prominent Hemingway scholar, mentions that this technique can be called "Conradian split" where "the subject is one character (Kurtz), the first-person narrator is another character (Marlowe), but both the subject and the narrator are of equal interest in the text." (104) In fact, understanding Brett is about understanding Jake, and understanding Jake is about understanding his psychological and physical judgment, action, and diction that construct his moral axis, the only grid readers may employ for filling the gaps, and apprehending Brett's artificial incompleteness.

Jake reinforces this same sense of artificial incompleteness. Jake's dialogues are full of ellipses, humor, and intentional miscommunication that readers' are forced to explicate and extract their own meaning from; this makes it even more difficult to make sense of what Jake is saying. In other words, the less information there is, the fuller its meaning and its context. Although Brett appears at the *Bal Musette*, the dancing club in Paris, in chapter three, she will not be explicated until the writer Robert Cohn, Jake's tennis mate, asks "[w]hat do you know about Lady Brett Ashley, Jake?" (SAR 46) Even when she is indirectly explained, the only information Cohn collects from Jake is that Brett was formerly a V.A.D., a volunteering nurse in a hospital, and is now a Lady waiting for a divorce and that her fiancé Mike Campbell lives in Scotland. Just

as Brett is concealed through Jake, Jake is also concealed by Hemingway's artistry. Readers can only understand Jake through his minimal and hard-boiled traits of dialogue. Lamb explains that the first person narrator "I" of Jake demands readers to "search for real life counterparts" (85) from personal memoirs and that this "I" is a constructed and incomplete fictive character. Through such difficulty, readers must penetrate Jake's nature by his minimal diction, and must construct Jake and Brett's character, while collecting separate information about Brett's image. This tells us that Lamb's notion of the "Conradian split" (104) is not only a technique that brings equal attention both to Brett and Jake, but also a mechanism that functions to stabilize the indecision and uncontrollable nature of the fictive characters. While this mechanism destabilizes the understanding towards these characters, this is exactly what heightens the artistry of artificial incompleteness, and further draws the reader's attention to these very characters.

Such destabilizing mechanisms generate many inconsistencies toward Brett. Even when readers become successfully synchronized with Jake's senses and moral axis, Brett still appears as a multi-dimensional character that possesses many contradicting traits. On one hand, Brett appears as archetypical flapper when she appears with men at the dancing club *Bal Musette* in Paris, but on the other, she appears as a prostitute when one of them says "I do declare. There is an actual harlot. I'm going to dance with her" (SAR 28). Moreover, when Jake finds them, "a crowd of young men in jerseys and some shirt sleeves" (SAR 28), her image switches again. When they come in with Brett, Jake becomes irritated and says, "I was very angry. Somehow they always made me angry. I know they are supposed to be amusing, and you should be tolerant, but I wanted to swing on one, any one, anything to shatter that superior, simpering composure" (SAR 28). Jake's reaction indicates some different images of Brett. He is angry not only because Brett is distracted by gay men⁷ while Jake is a heterosexual, but also because Jake has been made sexually maimed by war and feels that he is no different a being through the eyes of Brett. Extending the close reading even further highlights the idea that because the gay men cannot consummate their love with Brett despite their

virility, Brett appears almost as a lesbian, just like one of the gay men with “superior, simpering composure”(SAR 28) who would not be interested in Jake as a man. This scene abruptly presents Brett’s triple image in great speed: a flapper girl, a prostitute and a lesbian woman. Also, it presents the conflicting two sides of Jake’s character: muscular Jake and angry-impotent Jake envying the virile. This destabilizing mechanism constantly generates multidimensional images and derivative meanings, by fragmenting them instantly and abruptly redirecting the readers’ perception toward different focal points: it generates an inconsistency in the readers’ mind.

The inconsistency appears most vivid in the dialogue which is at the heart of this destabilizing mechanism. Michael Reynolds explains how the famous Modernist writer Ezra Pound had advised Hemingway in the 1920’s to learn Henry James’ techniques of allusion and subtleness, and how James therefore influenced Hemingway. He mentions that “in both writers, significance of the dialogue appears frequently in the white space between the lines; it is what the characters do not say that is highlighted by their conversations” (*Paris* 30). This technique, what Carlos Baker calls “the hovering subject” (*Writer* 185), does not directly talk about the “it” that is “at the apex of the pyramid” (*Writer* 185) but hovers over the conversation that at the surface does not seem to link with the “it.” A quintessential passage of his hovering subject can be seen in a passage of Jake and Brett. Jake begins abruptly,

“And there’s not a damn thing we could do,” I said.

“I don’t know,” she said. “I don’t want to go through that hell again.”

“We’d better keep away from each other.”(SAR 34)

When Jake says, “there is not a damn thing we could do,” the alluded subject is the something that is unsaid and a point of regret for Jake. When Brett replies with a gloomy voice “I don’t know,” it alludes that Brett went through some unsaid “hell” that she also regrets. The word “that” tells us it is something secretly shared between them. Jake, while attempting to break the tense atmosphere between them, suggests a solution that they stop seeing each

other. Although it is unsaid, we know that Jake's suggestion is the solution for the unknown "hovering subject." Here, in a narrative of three lines, the subject hovers visually but quietly above the dialogue nudging us with its subtlety, and expecting us to approach it. Jake's conjecture that their problem might settle if they stop seeing each other is the only clue given to determine the hovering and unsaid subject. The dialogue continues,

"But, darling, I have to see you. It isn't all that you know."

"No, but it always gets to be."

"That's my fault. Don't we pay for all the things we do, though?" (SAR 34)

When Jake's conjecture is denied and instead suggested that they see each other, it is clear that the implied "that" requires their physical appearance. Again, when Brett tells Jake that there is more to it than simply "see" one another, we know that there is some contact more than simply visioning their physical appearance. Moreover, the phrase "it always gets to be" suggests this is something that they always fail to attain though they look for it. Here, for the first time we can confirm they are sharing the same issue when we see Brett's pronoun "it" being utilized by Jake. With Brett's last phrase, we come to realize that Jake always fails to get something when Brett comes and see him, and that Brett is paying the its price within an unsatisfactory life. The persistent use of pronouns connotes their secrecy, something they cannot publicly express: sexual behavior. The readers cannot decide whether this is about sexual behavior, since at this point, we are not yet informed that Jake is in any way sexually maimed. It is only through allusions in the previous chapters such as Jake removing the prostitute Georgette's hand when touched⁸ or when Brett tells Jake "Oh, darling, I've been so miserable," (SAR 32) that readers begin to wonder there was something unsaid about Jake. All this time during the six lines, not once did the hovering subject descend to the readers; however, readers know something sexually ambiguous is the subject of the conversation. What lies in the margins of the dialogue is always the subject matter that generates inconsistencies, which bring an incomprehensible double-entendre or

triple entendre. Moreover, its artistry does more to this multi-dimensional meaning. Just before this dialogue took place, the fact that Brett told Jake “I simply turn to jelly when you touch me” (*SAR* 34) leaves the reader in wonder because it alludes us to think that Brett can obtain sexual climax through Jake’s caressing: the pair can in fact engage in sexual behavior. While the six lines of dialogue implied failure with relation to sexual intercourse, the fact that Brett turns “to jelly” forces the reader to be eternally left out from truth or left with many truths unsolved. Such dismissal of the subject of this artistry generates an eternal inconsistency leaving no clues for the reader to “decide” which truth is the ultimate truth.

Sheldon Grebstein, one of the few scholar who specializes in Hemingway’s writing style, elucidates his rhetorical scheme of dialogue that “each speaker will pick up a word or phrase from the other’s speech and utilizes it as the basis for his own remarks, but adding, subtracting, or changing, so that the dialogue continuously rehearses itself yet evolves as it proceeds” (96). In fact, although the four lines of Jake and Brett’s dialogue are compressed heavily, they bring more than they can rightfully contain by virtue of many shifting themes and embedded micro narratives through their incredibly highly poetic economy. When the language is very plain and simple and heavily condensed, it invites readers to follow the dialogue in haste, and it ultimately makes them land on many possible truths: it systematically generates inconsistency by proposing many possible truths. By constantly shifting, the reader is unable to come to a decisive conclusion about the heart of the conversation. When heavy inconsistencies are presented in this way, the only way readers can follow this type of dialogue is by feeling it through intuition. This allows one to easily swallow the inconsistencies embedded in the undercurrents of conversations. Only when one comes to apprehend these inconsistencies, can one begin to appreciate the beauty of artificial incompleteness which Fitzgerald once highly exalted.

All that aside, there is still one essential question that must be raised: how persuasive is Hemingway’s artistry with relation to Brett? If she is full of inconsistencies, why don’t people simply decide she is false, and drop her from the

discussion? If inconsistency is making Brett unreal and unreliable, why hassle with her at all? On the flip side, if it is a given that we feel she is important, then what makes us feel that Brett is so real and so worthy of attention even when she is so full of inconsistency? Did Fitzgerald demand Hemingway to cut the first 3500 words from the introduction about Brett because she did not sound real? Fitzgerald made Hemingway cut them because the heavy expository writing in the beginning only made “elephantine facetiousness,” (qtd. Svoboda 139) suggesting the 3500 words made her sound rather fake, unreal, banal, and boring. When Fitzgerald said “I go crazy when people aren’t at their best” (qtd. in Svoboda 140), he meant that Brett was good enough, however in order to keep her good, Hemingway must cut the introduction in the beginning. Fitzgerald was essentially tutoring Hemingway on how to portray reality with control by eliminating expositions. In fact, are people as consistent as expositions? In reality, don’t people do things they are not willing to do? To begin with, do people live consistently at all? Perhaps we are essentially inconsistent beings like Brett. When we think of why we can understand Brett’s inconsistency, we know by experience that reality is not as linear, intelligible, or explicable. If Hemingway did not present her with his artificial incompleteness, Brett would have been much more unreal and invalid.

If such is the case, how did artificial incompleteness of Hemingway’s make inconsistent reality look so true? Although Brett may be essentially inconsistent, the state of simply being inconsistent will not make good reality in fiction. Brett seems real only because her inconsistency is presented so truthfully to us through the rhetoric. In other words, we are able to manage the inconsistent nature of this reality, as long as this inconsistency is portrayed truthfully as it would be in real life. The story of Brett is about the art of inconsistency. Such art is about showing inconsistencies in a way that rings true. The scene where we can see Brett’s multi-personalities as a flapper girl, a prostitute, a lesbian woman in the club *Bal Musette*, is only an opening chapter for her inconsistencies that follow. As stated above, the function of dialogue keeps generating many innumerable numbers of indecipherable truths. Hemingway’s literary devices legitimately and constantly produce the multi-faceted nature

of Brett. While Brett smokes, drinks dances, associates with many friends, and finds divorce as a solution for bad marriage, readers can decipher that she is not simply a flapper who is completely out of step with tradition. Brett also has many Victorian traits as well.⁹ However, Brett can be seen yet in another way too. Although she maintains her status from her title of her husband¹⁰ and her traditional safety from Mike Campbell, her fiancé from the British aristocracy, she is in love with Jake who has no such status or the ability to consummate his love with Brett. Also, although Brett is portrayed to be in love with Jake in a highly romantic manner as that of the *The Inferno*, she breaks such romance so casually by having an escapade with Robert Cohn, Jake's Jewish tennis mate, in San Sebastian, Spain, without informing Jake of the truth until it became necessary. While Brett seemed so bold and extraordinary in doing so, she explains to Jake of the escapade "I rather thought it would be good for him," (SAR 89) and shows how serviceable and submissive she is, a characteristic that runs in contrast to what we already know of her. It is clear how the artificial incompleteness strategically employs inconsistencies that look very natural to Brett.

This artificial incompleteness is in a way a challenge to epistemology. It does not simply operate to produce inconsistency, but operates to deteriorate the binary form of human recognition to portray what reality is, by persistently and heavily juxtaposing binaries such as "muscular/feminine, homosexual/heterosexual," (Moddelmog 93) without letting the readers decide between them. So many alternatives are juxtaposed heavily throughout the novel most notably in a binary form as, "traditional or modern," "serviceable woman or egoistic woman," "muscular or feminine," "prostitute or motherly woman," "lesbian or heterosexual," et al.. Concerning Brett, these binaries no longer make sense. They numb human recognition by insensibly juxtaposing numerous binaries while depriving clues to decide which one is true. Such binaries provide no chance to the reader to develop a logical and a linear understanding toward the object, and in this case, Brett. The more insensibly the indecisive binaries are juxtaposed, the more it becomes incomprehensible. For example, although Brett is presented so many times as someone who still holds on to an old fash-

ioned late Victorian mind, readers are not allowed to literally understand her since Brett soon proves herself to be otherwise. While Brett attempted to prove to Jake that she was a motherly woman taking care of Robert Cohn in San Sebastian, she instantly proved herself to be having a sexual relationship with Cohn when she told Jake that “[Cohn] behaved rather well, too. He gets a little dull” (*SAR* 89). It implies that she is not as serviceable and submissive as she is presented to be in the previous lines.

Also working in the direct juxtaposition is Mike Campbell's nature, that symbolically reinforces Brett's old-fashioned late Victorian beliefs by providing her a link to the traditional aristocracy and a link to the soil of her motherland, Scotland. Here, even though Mike is presented as a traditional man who protects Brett, Mike is in fact the opposite: he is a bankrupt, and has no ability to protect her. However, when Mike gives Brett a “fearful hiding about Jews and bull-fighters,” (*SAR* 207) Brett says “Yes, I've had such a hell of a happy life with the British Aristocracy!” (*SAR* 207) and quickly abandons her position. Brett's image can be shown to be very lustful when she meets the nineteen year old bullfighter Pedro Romero of whom it is written that Brett “wants to see him close,” “wants to see him put on those green pants,” and “is dying to know how he can get into those pants.”(*SAR* 180) Brett's promiscuousness is reinforced by this lust directed toward Pedro, which happens in front of Jake, Mike, and Cohn who all love Brett. However, the fact that she became Pedro's lover exhibits her contradicting persistence toward the patriarchy. Although Brett seems to crave Pedro's world of Spanish bullfighting tradition, Brett soon separates from him. She tells Jake “[Pedro] wanted me to grow my hair out. Me, with long hair. I 'd look so like hell,” and continues saying that “he said it would make me more womanly. I'd look a fright” (*SAR* 246). This explicitly symbolizes the fact that she did not identify herself as a traditional woman who suffers and stays still as a Victorian woman in general, but instead as a person who is rather loyal to one's sensual feelings even though she had previously decided once to live in Pedro's traditional world. And soon, Brett tells Jake “I'm going back to Mike,” because “he is so damned nice and he's so awful. He's my sort of thing” (*SAR* 247).

Through the rapid change of position, Brett gives us one important truth we can perhaps believe: she is stably and consistently incomprehensible. This truth not only invalidates all binary questions previously stipulated with regards to Brett's identification, but also tells us that the binaries were not even effective in the first place. She can always be both, two sided, or even multi-faceted, or none of the above. Since so many binaries for Brett's identification are juxtaposed with one another, our recognition toward Brett's nature simply disintegrates: how can one be everything or nothing? The effect of juxtaposing indecisive binaries simply works to invalidate all kinds of dialectic questions posed by Brett. In the end, Hemingway's artistry toward Brett is directed to show how human recognition is vainly attempting to comprehend human reality with binary logic when the human reality itself is almost incomprehensible. In other words, the artificial incompleteness is an ontological technique that demonstrates the "what is" in reality. Thus, Brett Ashley is, no more and no less than whom she is in the novel.

IV Conclusion: The Artificial Incompleteness of Lady Brett Ashley

By viewing Brett through Hemingway's artistry, we come to realize what is making *SAR* so difficult to understand. It is clear that in every part of the text, there rests an artificial incompleteness supported by a destabilizing mechanism. It keeps generating inconsistencies to make us understand the truth that reality is inexplicable and inconsistent, but comprehensible if we understand the nature of such reality. Inconsistency in *SAR* may perplex readers, however, that is the prominent characteristic that draws attention to Hemingway's work. The artificial incompleteness counters essentialism, and that it will always enable Brett to escape from any kind of binary confinement. We are not only unable to assign a role to Brett, but also unable to determine what Brett "is not," since Brett herself is always contained within her multiple binaries. In sum, while artificial incompleteness constantly produces multi-dimensional inconsistencies promoted by the destabilizing mechanism, its attainment enables Brett to escape from any of our binary recognition. In the end, we

could perhaps conclude that, if misunderstanding Brett is misunderstanding Hemingway's artistry, it is only through paying close attention to Hemingway's artistry that we are able to decipher who Brett really is. We could equally conclude that reading Hemingway literature is about reading Hemingway's artistry; it is about understanding "what is, as it is" in his works, accepting what is implied in his in works, and accepting the contradicting truths one finds.

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¹ Although Hemingway quoted Gertrude Stein in the opening of *SAR* that “You are all a lost generation”(SAR 7), it is commonly understood that he meant to satirize those “lost generation” through the novel. Hemingway writes:

Paris, France.—The scum of Greenwich Village, New York, has been

skimmed off and deposited in large ladlesful on that section of Paris adjacent to the Café Rotonde. New scum, of course, has risen to take place of the old, but the oldest scum, the thickest scum and scummiest scum has come across the ocean, somehow, and with its afternoon and evening levees has made the Rotonde the leading Latin Quarter show place for tourists in search of atmosphere. . . .

. . . I want to correct that in a very public manner, for the artists of Paris who are turning out creditable work resent and loathe the Rotonde crowd.
(*By-Line* 23-25)

2 Nagel mentions that “[Jake] is free to relate incidents and conversations, people, and places, as he chooses,” and he “cannot be trusted for objectivity” (90)

3 Cf. Bloom, “Introduction” 1-3. In fact, Harold Bloom’s series only select literary figures from American literature that are considered highly important and perhaps difficult to understand. The fact that Brett Ashley and Nick Adams have been added to his collection suggests that Brett is as important as Nick Adams in understanding Hemingway literature, not to mention her role in *SAR*.

4 Hemingway explains his omission technique known as the iceberg theory that “[t]here is seven eighths of it under water for every part that shows. Anything you know you can eliminate and it only strengthens your iceberg” (Plimpton 34)

5 Cf. Whitlow, 49. Whitlow mentions that “Catherine Barkley, Marie Morgan, Maria, and Renata are generally considered mindless and subservient sex creatures” (49). Also, Cf. Gladstein, 58.

6 Cf. Hemingway, *A Moveable Feast*, 184.

7 Although Jake does not explicitly say these people were “gay men,” he informs the reader about them through their clothing. Jake mentions that a crowd of young men were wearing “jersys” (*SAR* 28), a quintessential clothe for a flapper girl in the mid-1920s. Gladstein also mentions that “[Brett] walks into the scene with a group of homosexual friends” (59).

8 Cf. *SAR*, 23.

⁹ Cf. Kawada, 38-60. I have argued in my other work that while Brett has been identified as a new woman since the late 1980s, she is not so much a new woman but rather a flapper, and more specifically a cutting edge flapper who was wearing the newest Chanel clothes in 1924 or 1925, while at the same time possessing late Victorian (1890-1901) traits inside her.

¹⁰ Cf. *SAR*, 207.