

## THE IMAGE OF CATHERINE BARKLEY

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**Annotation:** The portrayal of women in Ernest Hemingway's fiction has been a topic of much debate. Critics are divided on whether Hemingway presents one-dimensional characters or a more nuanced range of women. Some argue that he falls into stereotypes, categorizing women into “good” or “bad.” Others, however, see a wider spectrum of personalities and motivations. Feminist critics have particularly focused on characters like Catherine Barkley in *A Farewell to Arms*, with interpretations ranging from her death symbolizing the dominance of men to her representing courage and resilience. Ultimately, the passage leaves it up to the reader to consider the various viewpoints and develop their own analysis of Hemingway's female characters.

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Ernest Hemingway composed four major novels and dozens of short stories during his felicitous career as one of America's well-known twentieth century writers. During his lifetime and after his death critics have written down extensively about his works. They analyze the works, interpret them and also evaluate. Many critics debate about Ernest Hemingway's female characters. Some of them consider his female characters as androgynous. Linda Patterson Miller states that “Hemingway's fictional world ... was an androgynous world of passion and disorder and of each individual's fight against loneliness and his or her search for order and a sense of place”[1].

In addition to it, other critics have condemned the author of grouping women into two categories: “the deadly (Brett Ashley, Margot Macomber) or the saintly (Catherine Barkley, Maria). The former... his fear-projections, the latter his wish-fulfillments” (Edmund Wilson qtd. in Kert347). But a more contemporary writer, Roger Whitlow, contends that it is the critics, not Hemingway, who have limited the author's female characters to two types:

Overwhelmingly the most popular critical manner of categorizing Hemingway's women has been to dichotomize them. Philip Young generalizes that the women “are either vicious, destructive wives like Macomber's, or daydreams like Catherine (and) Maria”; Arthur Waldhorn that “Hemingway's women either caress or castrate”;

Jackson Benson that in Hemingway we find “the girl who frankly enjoys sex and who is genuinely able to give of herself” and “the all-around bitch”, “the aggressive, unwomanly female”; John Killinger that “Hemingway divides his women into the good and the bad, according to the extent to which they complicate a man's life. Those who are simple, who participate in relationships with the heroes and yet leave the heroes as free as possible receive sympathetic treatment; those who are demanding, who constrict the liberty of the heroes, who attempt to possess them are the women whom men can live without”[2].

One of the earliest of “revisionists”, Leon Linderoth considers, “that the Hemingway heroines are not so homogenous as many critics would have us believe”. We also appreciate his idea. Leon Linderoth stated that Hemingway's female characters could be divided loosely into six categories. Examples of the first group, “the mindless Indian girls,” include the sexually compliant young females in “Fathers and Sons” and “Ten Indians” (Linderoth 105). Liz Coates, Catherine Barkley, Jig, and Maria comprise the second group, “the naive, loving, trusting girls” (Linderoth 106). Category three “females who, though they do not actively corrupt a man, nonetheless cramp his style”- is exemplified by three wives in three short stories-“Cross Country Snow,” “Out of Season,” and “Snows of Kilimanjaro” (Linderoth 108). Brett Ashley and Margot Macomber make up the fourth group, “bitches by circumstance only” (Linderoth 108). Nick Adams’ mother in “The Doctor and the Doctor's Wife” and “In Another Country” and Mrs.Elliot of “Mr. and Mrs.Elliot” are the fifth category's “pure bitches” (Linderoth 109). And finally, Linderoth's sixth type of Hemingway woman, “the earth mother” [3;110].

“At least since Judith Fetterley’s impassioned denunciation of Ernest Hemingway (and not a few other male writers) in *The Resisting Reader: A Feminist Approach to American Fiction* (1978), the role of women in the Hemingway tale has been a subject of much discussion and debate. Fetterley argues, for example, that the death in childbirth of Catherine Barkley, heroine of “A Farewell to Arms”(1929), is Hemingway’s declaration that “male life is what counts” and “the only good woman is a dead one, and even then there are questions”[4].

Catherine also seems to colligate her own identity within that of her lover, protagonist Frederic Henry, when she declares such as “I want what you want. There isn’t any me any more. Just what you want[5;96].” In regard to this, Millicent Bell, argues:

“[Catherine displays] a passivity which has irritated readers (particularly female readers) because it seems to be a projection of male fantasies of the ideally submissive partner. It results from her desire to please. She is a sort of inflated rubber woman available at will to the onanistic dreamer” [6;100-101].

“Regarding attitudes toward Hemingway in academia during the late 1970s and 1980s, Lisa Tyler asserts that “anecdotal evidence would indicate that some college and university professors chose to drop Hemingway’s work from their course reading lists, largely for perceived sexism, and openly disparaged him to their students,” but also notes that Hemingway heroine Catherine Barkley was later rehabilitated, including in papers written from a feminist perspective, particularly by academics such as Joyce Wexler (Tyler, x). Wexler asserts:

**Used literature:**

1. [https://medium.com/@Derringer\\_Dick/ernest-hemingway-journalism-and-philosophy-cf9f85d46926](https://medium.com/@Derringer_Dick/ernest-hemingway-journalism-and-philosophy-cf9f85d46926).
2. [www.nobelprize.org](http://www.nobelprize.org).
3. <https://www.ernesthemingway.org/>.
4. <http://www.xroads.virginia.edu/~DRBR/heming.html>.
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