CHAPTER V

Conclusion

Though Hemingway criticism has grown in volume in the last fifty years but it has largely been centered, on either the technical aspects of his fiction such as symbolism, style and narrative technique or it has been dependent on such non-literary disciplines as psychology, philosophy and religion. Most studies of Hemingway’s thematic concerns have been so much dominated by the writer’s biography that the merit of his work as literature and of his genius as an artist have not received the critical attention they deserve.

Hemingway has remained much misunderstood in his representation of women. Branded as a He-man writer, upholding the code of sportsman, such as prize fighters, bull-fighters, hunters, fisherman etc., the high modernist of the Pound-Eliot group considered him a “dump-ox” (17) depicting physical activities of ox-like men or portraying natural scene. He was praised for his modern prose, functional rather than ornamental or rhetorical and for his manly values of courage and bravery. Santiago’s saying that ‘man can be destroyed and not defeated’ was viewed as the author’s own code of values.

The present study clearly and forcefully demolishes the critical fallacy of Hemingway being a misogynist or a masculine writer, writing only about issues or themes related to the male domain. It becomes evident from the present study that Hemingway has offered the most cosmopolitan view about the status of female sex in society. Rising above the time and space, not getting involved in the questions relevant only to his times, he looks at the issues of genders as a matter of metaphysics. Unlike the then-current thinking, his view is that the genders are not contrary but complementary. In spite of being projected as the all-male writer, Hemingway’s treatment of his woman characters is both realistic and refreshing. Writing in the post Suffrage era, he presumes social and political equality for women. He believes in the
separate identity of women as strong individuals who possess all the rights of being independent, free and sexually liberated. Thus, the present study demonstrates that gender was Hemingway’s constant concern and his female characters are drawn with complexity and vigor.

Hemingway’s era was completely dislocated by the First World War and its shattering effects separated the present from the past, splitting the western history into the old and the new, the conventional and the modern. There was a rise of this new generation, disenchanted with the orthodox and conventional world, anxious to experience life on their own and forge their own values to live in challenging modern times. It was also the time in the Anglo-American history when the New Woman was emerging on the social scene. In Hemingway’s fiction, a clear line is always drawn between women of the old world, the orthodox, conventional world and those of the new generation that came on the scene during and after the war. Hemingway’s women, the leading ones, belong to the new, the young generation, distinctly different from the older generation in their attitudes to conventional institutions of society. Living as an expatriate amongst the intelligentsia of the age, Hemingway always attempted to understand the changing social fabric of his era. Hemingway has always held his ground firmly against the orthodox band of the fashionable high modernists.

The present research reveals and highlights that Ernest Hemingway’s *The Sun Also Rises, A Farewell to Arms* and *For Whom the Bell Tolls* are the virtual case histories of women. It is the women’s fate which is the centre of attention and it is their heroic stance, their moment of epiphany which is the denouement of each of these works. Broer and Holland assert that “we see the roles Hemingway wished these women to play and the roles they actually played in their struggles with traditional prescriptions for gender identification and sexual orientation. We see these women not as Hemingway accessories but as accomplished women, heroines in their own right, diverse and complete as individuals.” (xiii) Similarly, here we trace and encapsulate the multi-dimensional depiction of the main female protagonists of Hemingway’s famous trilogy.
Hemingway puts his women on a plane where they share with men the quest of the human spirit for the meaning of life, where for all purposes the gender differences cease to exist. He acknowledges the need for the change of attitude towards women. Through his novels he shows how he gives ironic treatment to orthodox attitudes among both men and women. Conversely, he shows due respect and reverence for women with modern attitudes. Most of his writings have been praised for elaborating modern gender issues like studies of lives and relationships of New Man and New Woman, complicated by distinctly modern problems. The charge against him that he favors fictional males can easily be refuted because most of his works are consistently centered on women who are often revealed to be more mature than their males.

In his novel, *The Sun Also Rises*, Hemingway heralds the advent of New Woman. And in terms of gender definitions, it amounts to a contrastive depiction of the sterility of contemporary sexual relations and the regenerative force of primordial impulses. *The Sun Also Rises* documents the shifts in gender constructions that followed World War I and the societal effects of that shift. Brett and Jake embody these new gender relations. Brett, as a new woman, is the antithesis of her corseted, ruffled and straitlaced Victorian counterpart and looks and behaves like a modern woman readily eager for a change.

Brett Ashley is Hemingway’s attempt to deviate from the misogynistic view and an attempt at creating a complex female character. *The Sun Also Rises* deals with the changing attitude of women. The American women experienced a widening of their spheres of interest and activity due to the peculiar circumstances. Brett represents the woman of her time in that she has a voice, her opinion matters and she considers herself equal to men. By creating her, Hemingway revealed the actual role, position and condition of women in Lost Generation. Brett Ashley has a significant impact on the literature and social standards of her time. In her own unique ways, she defined a portion of Lost Generation. Brett could not be seen simply as an object of desire; rather she should be viewed as enabler and asset for the better understanding
of her generation. Even after decades of her first appearance in the literary world, Brett still remains fresh and a curious persona for the readers and even the generations ahead.

Through the character of Brett Ashley, Hemingway has tried to highlight the sexual attitudes and resulting gender conflicts of his time. Brett, in the course of the novel, is found as a New Woman, advocating her personal and sexual freedom, economic independence and political powers. In Brett, Hemingway succeeds in creating a bold and liberated character. Despite all the negative criticism, Brett emerges as an exemplary epitome of modern new woman of her era.

In *A Farewell to Arms*, Hemingway places Catherine in the center of war-torn times and she emerges as a modern, independent young woman. Her strong individuality, philosophical views and independent thinking emerge into bold relief, highlighting the solidity and sturdy concreteness of her personality. Catherine emerges as a vibrant character who has a strong sense of personal honor, a developed moral sense and a distinct independent and thinking personality, which she retains up to the end. Hemingway has portrayed Catherine to be simple yet assertive. She is exquisitely simple, extremely gentle, deeply sincere, intensely emotional and amicably brave. Even though Catherine does not possess the aggression and assertion of the twentieth century woman yet she is truly heroic and bold. Catherine is a beautiful amalgamation of independent thinking as well as the homely domestic diva whose world revolves around her family. In the character of Catherine, Hemingway explores a woman’s attempt to find private peace in the patriarchal framework through self-less love but there is also a new woman’s affirmation of will. Catherine is self-reliant and competent. Catherine’s intelligence, resourcefulness and ability to cope with the most complex issues place her in the category of confident and strong characters. She is a woman who grew up in a tragic world, suffering from war and yet Hemingway endows her with the qualities of creating happiness, love and a sense of security around her. She lives according to the dictates of her private morality. Her decision to discard the formalization of her love relation with Henry and her decision
to give birth to the baby out of the wedlock simply show and prove the moral and
spiritual core of her personality.

In *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, Hemingway introduces two different female
characters, who are quite opposite to each-other. Maria and Pilar are two different
identities. Maria is a sufferer on the battle ground. Her family members have been
killed by the fascists and she has been raped. Having faced all of these treacheries,
Maria emerges to be a calm, sane person who is willing to overcome a dreadful past
and begin afresh. Maria is a warm-hearted, loving and caring person and she helps
immensely in the mental development of the male protagonist Jordan. Maria is a
symbol of true love. Pilar on the other hand is a leader, a strong woman and a
motherly figure throughout the novel. Pilar plays the role of a benevolent mother as
well as a teacher to both Maria and Jordan. She teaches them how to live and work for
the fulfillment of life. Pilar could, easily be, termed as the true hero of the book.
Hemingway has paid a great tribute to his love for Spain and its people by creating a
masterpiece like *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, and for bringing in focus the new women
of Spain in the form of Maria and Pilar. Hemingway’s grasp of female psychology is
clearly revealed when he describes Pilar’s hostility towards Maria whom she
considers her baby because the latter had monopolized Jordan’s love. Here is a
triangular love affair with Jordan being pulled by Pilar on the one hand and Maria on
the other if Hemingway presents wannabes like Maria, he equally succeeds such
dominating and domineering female as Pilar.

Not only the main female protagonists but also the minor ones like Ferguson,
Van Campen, Frances are created with such ease and finesse that they help in
bringing out the hidden aspects of Hemingway heroines. They cater to the needs of
artistic purposes and provide grounds for the juxtaposition with the main characters’
roles and their importance. These minor female characters have their own attitude and
approach towards life. They also represent the social milieu of that time. Some of
them represent the new woman of the twentieth century and some present the old
traditional value system and their presence and functionality in the course of the
novels are very significant. Hemingway has created them with important space and role in the course of his works. These minor characters appear to widen the novel’s canvas and help carry the narrative forward.

Ernest Hemingway has emerged as a feministic writer in his trilogy. He has portrayed Brett as a true symbol of 20th century independent, liberated and bold woman. Catherine emerges to be helpful, careful, brave and courageous, the kind of woman who lives by her private morality. The portrait of Maria is feminine, a symbol of loyalty, devotion and true love. She brings a sense of joy and fulfillment in Jordan’s life. There is no frustration or emptiness in her. She has the power to change the mentality of man. And Pilar comes across as a strong woman as well as protective mother figure. She is bold, mysterious and an educator of life. Hemingway’s female characters have the capacity, with their qualities to change the attitude of their counterparts towards love and life.

Even though Hemingway’s women frequently face charges of unrealism, they are the ones who really face reality and try to put arduous times behind them and start afresh. Hemingway holds a positive view about the feminist concerns and gives their aspirations a healthy direction. In his works, he holds that it is woman alone who can provide an alternative to the present humdrum state of affairs. Hemingway was reacting to the biographical and historical circumstances that included the increasing influence of women over American culture. Hemingway welcomed the liberalization of women with open arms and presented that in the characterization of Brett and Catherine.

At the same time he realized that the only source of solace could be provided by the loyal, devoted lovers and domestic women who provided timely help to their male partners and these characters appear in the form of Catherine Barkley and Maria. Thus, Hemingway offers valuable resources for studying the contested and interesting twentieth century history of gender in the United States, as well as in the other countries, where he lived, fought, reported and wrote. He always refrained himself
from treating his heroines in a reductive manner. They are central to thematic and structural design of Hemingway’s novels.

The role of female characters in Hemingway’s fiction is not marginal. Hemingway has successfully delineated women characters through his experience and tries his best to trace their centrality in human affairs. All in all, in spite of the charges of masculinity and misogyny foisted on Hemingway, he proves himself to be an ardent supporter of the feminist movement for making his women not restricted to the domestic spheres but concerned and affected by the questions of human destiny and meaning of life.
WORKS CITED
