

# Hemingway's view of women is a source of constant controversy essay sample

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Hemingway's view of women is a source of constant controversy, and Catherine Barkley is at the center of debate. The novel *A Farewell to Arms* by Ernest Hemingway depicts Catherine Barkley as an unfair portrayal of a woman. Her constant nurturing of Henry, and selfless undertaking of the burden of pregnancy is indicative of a misogynist gone awry. Hemingway's hatred towards women leads him to portray women as being dependant, obsessed, and naïve serving as slaves to their men in every aspect.

After the death of her previous husband, Catherine Barkley was left a life of perpetual loneliness. Upon meeting Henry, Catherine quickly became overly dependant on him to fill the emptiness in her life. Days after meeting him she asks him if he loves her. Catherine knows quite well that it is nearly impossible for this to be true in such a short amount of time, but when Henry tells her he loves her, she becomes overwhelmed with happiness. Catherine is aware that Henry is lying to her, but because she is so dependant on him, she pretends that what he says is valid.

Subsequent to Henry's injuries after a mortar shell was detonated, Catherine takes it upon herself to constantly nurture Henry, catering to his every need. Not only did Catherine transfer from her previous medical post to the one in Milan where she could be close to Henry and personally assist to each of his requests, but she also switched from the day shift to night-duty where she could aid to all of his sexual desires. Much to Catherine's dismay, she is unable to work both shifts because she does not want the other nurses on duty to outfit Henry. She says, I don't. I don't want anyone else to touch you. I'm silly. I get furious if they touch you (103). Through these incidents,

Catherine is portrayed as being overly dependent on Henry, worried that something frightful would occur if they were to be separated for any amount of time. Hemingway makes Catherine out to be this helpless woman who would simply fall apart without the presence of her man in her everyday life.

There comes a point in the novel when Catherine begins to exceed her role in her constant nurturing of Henry during his illness. Dialogue between the two provides evidence that Catherine serves more so as a slave rather than that of a concerned lover. After questioning Henry of his former loves, Catherine replies, Ill say just what you wish and Ill do what you wish and then you will never want any girls, will you Ill do what you want and say what you want and then Ill be a great success, wont I (105). Catherine then asks, What would you like me to do now that youre all ready and Henry replies Come to the bed again and Catherine answers, All right. Ill come. There isnt any me any more. Just what you what want(105-106). This passage unambiguously demonstrates Hemingways view of women. Hemingways hatred towards women leads him to depict Catherine as having no purpose other than to serve as a slave to Henry, both personally and sexually. Catherine is stupid and naïve enough to accept her role in this position and to acknowledge that she does not possess a mind of her own.

After discovering that she is pregnant, Catherines selfless ways are evident to the point where she is hesitant in telling Henry out of fear that the pregnancy will be nothing but a nuisance to him. In her obsession with Henry, she is more worried about how Henry feels about the baby than she is about the health of herself and the baby combined. Catherine declares to

Henry, But you mustnt mind, darling. Ill try and not make trouble for you. I know Ive made trouble now. But havent I been a good girl until now (138)

Hemingways portrayal of Catherine shows that her obsession over Henry is to such an extent that during her pregnancy Henrys needs still come first, then the needs of the baby come second, whereas her own personal needs are the least important.

Even after discovering that she is pregnant with Henrys child, Catherine still remains feeling like a prostitute at times. Once Henry receives orders that he must return to the front and leave Milan, he arranges one last rendezvous for him and Catherine in a plush hotel suite. The room was furnished in red plush. There were many mirrors, two chairs and a large bed with a satin coverlet. A door that led to the bathroom (152). Catherine was not happy with the situation by any means. Ive never felt like a whore before, Catherine explains. Henry replies, Youre not a whore. and Catherine answers, I know it, darling. But it isnt nice to feel like one (152). Eventually, Catherine comes around and says, Come over, please. Im a good girl again (152). This event portrays Catherine as a prostitute of sorts, a sexual slave to Henry.

In the novel *A Farewell to Arms*, Hemingway efficiently sends a message to his readers that he has a general distaste towards women. Through the character Catherine Barkley, Hemingway portrays women as he feels they are: dependant, naïve, obsessive, selfless, and should serve as prostitutes to their men. Hemingways narrative of Catherine Barkley is evident of a misogynist gone awry and therefore Catherine Barkley is an unfair portrayal of a woman.