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“WE LIVE IN A COUNTRY
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THE QUEER SENSIBILITY OF
A FAREWELL TO ARMS

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IN LETTERS BETWEEN Hemingway and his editor Max Perkins about material that Scribner's wanted to eliminate from the serialized version of *A Farewell to Arms*, one suggested cut—Rinaldi's insinuation that Frederic Henry and the priest are homosexuals—stands out as rather odd (Hemingway, 11 March 1929; *The Only Thing That Counts* 94–96).¹ Scribner's interest in cutting this passage is not so odd. After all, by proposing that Frederic Henry and the priest might be “a little that way” (65), Rinaldi puts their relationship into a category that transgresses conventions related to the Catholic priesthood, the military, and men's friendships not only of that time but even of ours. Why wouldn't the editors of a respected publishing house and magazine prefer to eliminate a reference that might raise not only eyebrows but ire? What is strange is that Hemingway included the homosexual allusion in the first place and then insisted it not be touched.

Attempting to justify the changes that Scribner's wanted to make to the *Farewell* manuscript for serialization in *Scribner's Magazine*, Perkins wrote to Hemingway, “I think . . . that cuts can be philosophically made, for if we can keep people from being diverted from the qualities of the material

itself, by words and passages which have on account of *conventions*, an astonishingly exaggerated importance to them, a great thing will have been done. Your mind is so completely free of these conventions—and it is fortunate it is—that you do not realize the strength with which they are held. If you knew a few of the genteel!” (19 February 1929, *The Only Thing That Counts* 92–93; emphasis in original). While Perkins makes a case for excision on the basis of not wanting to offend a group of important, albeit prudish, readers—thus revealing his concerns about censorship, marketability, the firm’s reputation, and his own uneasiness regarding transgressions of certain norms—an argument could be made that the passage in question *might* be cut without damage to story.² But that’s not the argument I want to make. Instead, I will propose that this passage is one of many that reveal a queer sensibility underwriting the connections among the characters in the novel, including that between Catherine Barkley and Frederic Henry. Far from suggesting that this sensibility is peripheral to the novel, this essay will contend that it is philosophically central, helping to explain many issues of importance, including the desire that binds Frederic and Catherine and the larger meaning of the story.

For the purposes of my argument, “the queer” will be defined not merely as the abnormal or the immoral, i.e., that which helps define the “normal” by being its “inferior” other, but also as the anti-normal, that which purposefully resists the normal—especially as it pertains to sexual and gender expectations—and even presents itself as superior to it.³ Within this perspective, the materialization of the queer can simply stand in opposition to the normal, attempt to redefine that standard, and/or actively resist “normalcy” by presenting its inversion as preferable. In *A Farewell to Arms*, both resistance to and reconstitution of traditional gender and sexual mores are at work as Hemingway’s characters act both in opposition to time-honored conventions about sexual behavior and desire and in accordance with changing views of sexuality expressed by some of the more liberal marriage “experts” and sexologists writing in the early part of the 20th century.⁴

If one thinks about it, there are hardly any normal sexual relationships and very little normal sex in *A Farewell to Arms* if by “normal” we mean heterosexual missionary-position sex within the context of a religious- or state-approved marriage. This partly explains why, during its serialization in 1929, the novel was banned in Boston for being “salacious.” Sex with prostitutes,

often while drunk, sex outside of marriage, sex in a hospital bed almost surely with the woman on top⁵—this sounds more like an episode of *Grey's Anatomy* than the plot of a classic American novel. It's not that Hemingway didn't recognize that his audience, even beyond the "genteel" readers, might condemn Frederic and Catherine rather than sympathize with them. After all, his text is full of arguments justifying their actions.

Consider, for example, the text's recurring attention to sex with prostitutes. It might sound sordid, but during a war who can blame soldiers for seeking pleasurable diversions from the gritty horrors they encounter every day? Certainly not the Italians or their military, for as Frederic points out, there were two "bawdy houses" in the town where his unit was stationed, "one for troops and one for officers" (*FTA* 5).⁶ Indeed, at one point, Rinaldi complains that the "girls" don't seem like prostitutes anymore; "they are old war comrades. . . . It is a disgrace that they should stay so long that they become friends" (65). In America, however, the sentiment was less indulgent, and Frederic's fairly positive reports of his experiences with prostitutes take on a different light with that context in mind. Nancy Bristow notes that as the United States entered the war, "American troops became the target of an important domestic program" (7). Formerly tolerated brothels were closed by anti-vice campaigns during the 1910s, and parents as well as progressive groups such as the American Social Hygiene Association⁷ lobbied to cleanse U.S. military training camps, perceived as breeding grounds for vice, illicit sex, alcohol, and venereal disease. According to Ruth Rosen, the anti-vice movement developed into a full-scale campaign against prostitutes, with federal authorities concerned about estimates that half the U.S. Army might be infected with gonorrhea. As potential carriers, prostitutes became identified as "a significant and dangerous internal domestic enemy" (Rosen 33). The federal government responded by forming the Commission on Training Camp Activities (CTCA), whose job it was to keep U.S. troops "physically healthy *and* morally pure," to lead them away from dissipation and debauchery, and toward an improved moral state and higher social values (Bristow 7, 12). Bombarded by letters from concerned parents and wives, who worried that their sons and husbands would be forever changed in military training camps by the temptations of alcohol, illicit sex, and immorality, President Wilson declared, "The Federal Government has pledged its word that as far as care and vigilance can accomplish the result, men committed to

its charge will be returned to the homes and communities that so generously gave them with no scars except those won in honorable conflict" (qtd. in Bristow 7).

Frederic Henry has joined the Italian army (or, as he puts it, "the ambulance" *FTA* 18), and thus missed the experiences and educational programs promoted in U.S. training camps, but clearly his dalliances with prostitutes would offend many citizens of his home country. They would especially reject his argument that "the night [with prostitutes] was better [than the day] unless the day was very clean and cold" (13). Readers who disapproved of Frederic's sexual liaisons could point to the fact that he contracted gonorrhea, which in the moral universe promoted by the social reformers in the U.S. could be read as punishment for those passionate nights.⁸ More importantly, as his relationship with Catherine deepens, Frederic comes to understand the higher, purifying power of love, as the priest had predicted: "What you tell me about in the nights. That is not love. That is only passion and lust. When you love you wish to do things for. You wish to sacrifice for. You wish to serve" (72). Thus, the lesson of true love is sharpened by its contrast to the lustful, selfish, and ultimately empty one-night stands with prostitutes.

But if Frederic's defense of sex with prostitutes is temporary and limited—a sexual encounter tendered by the conditions of war, compromised by a sexually transmitted disease, and trumped by the superiority of sex with someone he loves—what, then, of sex outside of marriage? Well, Catherine didn't sleep with her boy soldier and look what good that did him—or her for that matter. As she tells Frederic, "You see I didn't care about the other thing and he could have had it all. He could have had anything he wanted if I would have known. I would have married him or anything. I know all about it now" (*FTA* 19). During war, couples have to weigh customary morality against the very real possibility that they might never see each other again.⁹ The lesson Catherine learned with her dead fiancé is not simply that of *carpe diem*, but of openness to a partner's sexual desires ("He could have had *anything* he wanted . . . I would have married him or *anything*," my emphasis). Besides, as Catherine points out, if she and Frederic were actually to marry, they would be separated (114–115) because, according to Red Cross rules, a woman could not be both nurse and wife (Comley and Scholes 39). So, paradoxically, marriage is out of the question if the lovers are to remain together.

However, the couple's justification of their premarital relationship goes beyond the utilitarian. During the time period of the novel and especially into the 1920s when Hemingway was writing it, sex before marriage became more commonplace, although as Nancy Cott points out, "going all the way"—especially with more than one partner, or without the motivation of true love—was still stigmatized and could be fatal for a woman's reputation" (160). Writing in *Sex and Youth* in 1928, Sherwood Eddy warned young people who were contemplating sex outside of marriage, "You probably recognise that you will be deliberately placing yourselves *in revolt against society and its standards*, and may be called upon to pay the price of such a step. If morality be taken as the regulation of individual instincts in the interest of social welfare, it is not a light thing to place yourselves in a position of repudiating the standards of the society of which you are a part" (218; original emphasis). Frederic and Catherine's devotion to each other thus lessens the potential that others might condemn their relationship, but doesn't eliminate it. Along with other sexual and marital commentators of the time, Eddy claimed that the question is whether physical sexual expression is "*a wholesome preparation for marriage at its highest*" or "a practice that will form the habit of sensual gratification on the petting level" (64; original emphasis).

But although premarital sex within the context of a loving, monogamous relationship might have had its defenders, the introduction of a pregnancy opens Frederic and Catherine to heavy societal censure if they fail to marry, as they both understand. Jeffrey Weeks notes that unmarried mothers in Great Britain remained on the "outer fringes of respectability," even though steps were taken from 1918–1926 to recognize that out-of-wedlock children should not be punished for the missteps of their parents (208). Significantly, then, Frederic and Catherine make the case that their union constitutes marriage even without the state- or religious-based ritual that traditionally sanctions it. "We said to each other," Frederic reports, "that we were married the first day she had come to the hospital and we counted months from our wedding day" (*FTA* 114). As unorthodox as their nonmarital marriage must have seemed to many readers of the time, especially the conservative readers that Perkins worried about, it actually fits a standard that some of the more liberal sexual and marital reformers of the time were advancing. As Havelock Ellis, a British sexologist whose writings Hemingway read with much enthusiasm early in his life, put it, "Marriage

in the biological sense, and even to some extent in the social sense, is a sexual relationship entered into with the intention of making it permanent, even apart from whether or not it has received the sanction of the law or the Church" (*Psychology of Sex* 256). Within this view, the intent and quality of the sexual relationship gave it the name of marriage, not the formal license of the state or Church.

In fact, the nature of the relationship that Frederic and Catherine enjoy reflects the ideal partnership that marriage manuals and sexologists were promoting in the first half of the 20th century. When Hemingway was working on *A Farewell to Arms*, marriage was undergoing a change in America. The 1920 census revealed that one of seven marriages ended in divorce (Carter 75), an unsatisfactory record that many social scientists attributed to accelerating "modernization," including an influx of women into the work force. Marital authorities thus recommended new ways to make marriage work.¹⁰ Men and women were encouraged to be companions and friends as well as lovers invested in each other's sexual pleasure. To bridge the differences between them as members of the opposite sex, married couples were pressed to increase satisfaction in the bedroom. Simultaneous orgasms were considered the height of the successful marital experience as the "cult of the mutual orgasm" crystallized during this time (Gordon 69). This experience symbolized the complete union of two separate beings and was thus highly promoted, but the mutual satisfaction of both husband and wife, whether simultaneously or successively, was the order of the day. Marie Stopes's *Married Love*, first published in March 1918, was the most popular marriage manual in Great Britain, Catherine's homeland, and was also popular in America and many foreign countries (it was translated into 14 different languages). In his introduction to the 30th edition of this book, Ross McKibbin observes that WWI accelerated a noticeable trend in the years leading up to it: "a willingness in many quarters to disentangle marital sexuality from reproduction and to accept sexual pleasure within marriage as itself legitimate." McKibbin speculates that *Married Love* enjoyed such immediate popularity because it reinforced what people were happy to read: "that sex *should* be pleasurable, indeed joyous" (xlvii). One of the most electrifying parts of *Married Love* was the instruction Stopes provided about female sexuality. Her explicit instructions about female anatomy and eroticism created, according to Ellen M. Holtzmann, expectations among women regarding sexual satisfaction in

marriage (40–41). Stopes especially endeavored to debunk the myth that “nice” women were naturally uninterested in sex. She proposed, to the contrary, that every “normal” woman has a “profound, fundamental rhythm of sex desire” which has been “covered over or masked by the more superficial and temporary influences due to a great variety of stimuli or inhibitions in modern life” (41–42). Women, particularly married women, were encouraged by Stopes to chart their own sex rhythms but, even more, to reject the assumption that they lacked sexual desire or that such desire should be suppressed. Husbands were urged to study their wives so as to adjust their sexual demands so that “they are in harmony with her nature” (Stopes 47).

Married couples were thus directed to learn about the intricacies of erotic pleasure as a way to deepen the connection between them, to confirm the depth of their love, and to improve the chances that the marriage would last. For instance, in 1928, Samuel D. Schmalhausen wrote:

“Married love” is a fine phrase for the splendidly new experiment in equating the magic turbulent passion of sex love with the responsible and dignified status of marriage. . . . Many psychoanalytical studies demonstrate with a shocking clarity how marital disharmony may be linked with the absence or petering out of sexual love. . . . Thus, we witness incredible changes in personal deportment which defy explanation unless we are equipped with enough sympathy and wisdom to appreciate how desperately men and women are trying to save marriage by galvanizing it into a new lease of life by sexualizing it. (42–43)

Marriage manuals explained that “[t]he difference between the sexes was a specifically erotic difference, and its essence lay in sexual timing” (Carter 91). Husbands, whom social scientists found were generally uneducated in the physiology of the female body and the art of bringing sexual pleasure to a woman, were urged to develop their lovemaking skills so that they could satisfy their wives’ sexual needs. The ideal sexual union, the simultaneous orgasm, thus represented a form of shared bliss that could bind men and women together in “what one manual called ‘a lifelong honeymoon’” (qtd. in Carter 96).

In light of these expectations, Catherine and Frederic’s relationship is clearly a marriage in kind if not by law. “It was lovely in the nights,” Freder-

ic relates, “and if we could only touch each other we were happy. Besides all the big times we had many small ways of making love and we tried putting thoughts in the other one’s head while we were in different rooms. It seemed to work sometimes but that was probably because we were thinking the same thing anyway” (*FTA* 114). Occasionally, conventional morality rears its judgmental head, as when Catherine feels like a “whore” in the hotel in Milan (152), and late in the novel when she concludes, “I suppose if we really have this child we ought to get married” (293). Later Frederic wonders whether Catherine’s struggle in childbirth might be retribution for premarital sex, but he then decides, “It would have been the same if we had been married fifty times” (320). Frederic and Catherine’s moments of wondering whether they should follow the accepted norms of society thus foreground the queer tensions between conventional and unconventional in Hemingway’s portrayal of what many readers would have found an unorthodox, unconventional, and “immoral” relationship that he nevertheless presents as embodying a commonly accepted ideal of “married love.”

The queer sensibility of the novel is advanced in other ways. Frederic has two significant relationships beyond that with Catherine—his friendships with the priest and Rinaldi. These characters also help to verify Frederic’s credentials as a man and hero, for he is, undoubtedly, one of the least heroic heroes in American fiction, an anti-hero, if you will. He is wounded while serving cheese and pasta to the Italian troops; he gets jaundice from drinking too much in the hospital; the only man he kills is a sergeant in the army he serves; and he runs away from the war after the Italian battle police accuse him of treason and attempt to have him killed. Yet both Rinaldi and the priest adore Frederic, and their different ways of loving him confirm that he is, at heart, a decent man, someone who might eventually deserve the beautiful, lovely, and compliant Catherine Barkley. There is, however, more than a hint of the homoerotic in their attachments to Frederic and in his to them. I have already noted Rinaldi’s suspicion that the priest and Frederic are a little “that way” and Hemingway’s determination not to remove this remark from the novel. Although such a contention, coming as it does from the garrulous and bawdy Rinaldi, might be brushed off as a jest—the kind of talk that men employ in homosocial places such as locker rooms and military barracks¹¹—the priest and Frederic do have several intimate and tender moments alone, once in Frederic’s room, in the dark, with Frederic lying on Rinaldi’s bed stroking a blanket

while the priest sits on Frederic's cot and talks to him (*FTA* 177). The priest, who makes a point of saying he has never loved any woman (72), frequently touches Frederic, patting his hand (73) or putting his hand on Frederic's shoulder (173, 180). When he visits Frederic in the hospital, Frederic twice describes him as "embarrassed," which seems more the response of an awkward teenager with a crush than that of a friend or even of a priest, whose job it is to give comfort to the wounded (68). As Ira Elliott puts it, "the relationship between Frederic and the priest seems to exist in the space between appreciation and desire (friendship and love)," but their "growing eroticism" seems amplified in the priest's visit to Frederic's room (296).

More overtly homoerotic is the relationship between Rinaldi and Frederic. Peter Cohen points out that "Rinaldi's interactions with Frederic largely revolve around trying to get Frederic to agree to a kiss" (42). While one might interpret Rinaldi's behavior as the custom of a more expressive Italian culture or simple teasing, Frederic continually rejects these attempts, suggesting that he knows "exactly what such behavior means where he comes from" (Cohen 43). After one of Frederic's rebuffs, Rinaldi declares, "I won't kiss you if you don't want. I'll send your English girl" (67), implying that Catherine could serve as his surrogate in a triangulated relationship between the three of them. Indeed, in resisting Rinaldi's embrace, Frederic seems to protest too much as he does seem to reciprocate some of the interest his friend has in him. Cohen notes an erotically suggestive episode early in the novel when Frederic takes off his shirt and rubs himself with a towel while watching the "good-looking" Rinaldi sleeping on the bed in the room they share (12). Later during the Italian retreat, Frederic sleeps in Rinaldi's bed rather than his own (Cohen 47–48) for reasons he doesn't explain but that might be interpreted as his effort to experience a physical closeness to the man he loves and has missed.

Significantly, as with Frederic and his two male friends, Catherine's only other close relationship—with Helen Ferguson, her nursing colleague—also has homoerotic overtones. Miriam Mandel points out that Helen "inhabits every Italian setting in which [Catherine] appears"; indeed, she "seems to be [Catherine's] constant companion" (18). We see them in "conventionally romantic settings" (Mandel 19), on a bench in a garden (*FTA* 25), for example, but especially at the luxurious hotel in Stresa where Helen reacts uncontrollably to Frederic's unexpected appearance. Ostensibly, she is angry at the man she believes has ruined Catherine with

"his sneaking Italian tricks" (246). But later, she seems more distraught about Catherine leaving her: "I've always wanted to go to the Italian lakes and this is how it is," she cries (248). As Mandel claims, Frederic does not understand that sexual jealousy might motivate these outbursts (21–22). When he says he doesn't think Helen "wants what we have," Catherine responds, "You don't know much, darling, for such a wise boy" (257), a response that reveals her superior understanding of the meaning of Helen's affection. Although Helen probably has never professed her love for Catherine—she may not even have named it for herself—her behavior (following Catherine from place to place, being so upset when their plans are interrupted) indicates that if it were possible, she *would* want what Frederic has: a romantic relationship with Catherine (Mandel).

Although Hemingway could, of course, have developed the lines of same-sex desire among his central characters without reference to contemporary "scientific" writings on homosexuality, it is possible that he found psychological explanations in the controversial work of Havelock Ellis, especially his writing on "sexual inversion" in which Ellis attempted to present homosexuality as a natural anomaly rather than a degenerate condition.¹² Michael Reynolds notes that in the early 1920s, Hemingway urged all his friends as well as Hadley, his bride-to-be, to read Ellis's *Studies in the Psychology of Sex*. By April 1921, he had sent Hadley three volumes of Ellis's multi-volume *Psychology* (Reynolds 184–185). In a summation of his views published about the time Hemingway was writing *A Farewell to Arms*, Ellis identified three kinds of inversion, each of which had multiple variations: (1) "true congenital sexual inversion," which could occur early in life or later; (2) "bisexual attraction in which the individual's sexual impulse goes out towards individuals of both sexes (most though not all of these cases being apparently inverts who have acquired normal habits)"; and (3) "the large and vague class of the pseudo-homosexuals, whose perversity is due either to temporary circumstances (as among sailors), to senile impotency, or to a deliberate search for abnormal sensations" (*Psychology of Sex: A Manual for Students* 237).

The erotic energy between Hemingway's characters of the same sex could suggest that one or more of them—especially the priest or Helen—*might* be one of the "congenital" inverts for whom Ellis and some of his counterparts were attempting to develop sympathy by arguing for the biological and thus immutable basis of their homosexuality. Or they could be

bisexual, possibly inverts who have acquired “normal habits.” Just as likely they could be read as “pseudo-homosexuals” who have a trace or more of homosexual impulse that is catalyzed into existence by the same-sex environment in which they work. For example, in investigating the forms and causes of female inversion, Ellis claimed that “Homosexuality is specially fostered by those employments which keep women in constant association, not only by day, but often at night also, without the company of men” (“Sexual Inversion in Women” 212). Such environments included convents, large hotels where maids worked, establishments employing seamstresses and lace-makers, theatres where actresses, chorus- and ballet-girls hung out, schools and colleges, etc. (212–219). Surely, the all-female nursing environment in which Helen Ferguson and Catherine Barkley work could be added to this list. Within such settings, Ellis concluded that “Passionate friendships, of a more or less unconsciously sexual character,” might fade once the woman returned to a more heterogeneous setting and could not be included in the region of “true sexual inversion” (219).

Thus far in my argument, it might seem that Frederic and Catherine are more unconventional than queer. They redefine their traditionally forbidden relationship as an ideal one, and they are the more or less willing recipients of the homoerotic attentions of their friends. Indeed, the escape to Switzerland seems, at first, to be an escape as well from the queer desires circulating in the same-sex environments where Frederic and Catherine have been located. The Swiss idyll apparently allows for a more concentrated focus on their heterosexual coupling, a focus blurred only by reminders of the ongoing war (*FTA* 291, 292, 298) and anxiety about the approaching child. One might argue, then, that the abundance of same-sex passion directed at the two protagonists simply magnifies their attractiveness as people and hence their suitability for each other, and also counters the charge that they are sinning by not marrying. So many people love them, how can we condemn them? However, the queer sensibility of the novel is advanced in at least one other way, this time through Catherine and Frederic themselves, demonstrating that queerness lies not on the border but at the very heart of their desire and their connection.

Of all the words of love spoken between lovers over the years, some of the strangest have to be Catherine’s announcement to Frederic that “I wish I’d had [gonorrhea] to be like you” (*FTA* 299). If Sandra Spanier is right, as I think she is, that Catherine is the code hero who teaches Frederic by

example how to live in a shattered world, then this would seem a rather low point in that education. Wishing for a painful and, in the era before antibiotics, only questionably curable sexually transmitted disease so that one can “be like” one’s lover takes identification to an extreme, a very odd lesson indeed. However, Catherine’s extension into Frederic’s life experience goes even further: “I wish I’d stayed with all your girls so I could make fun of them to you” (299). “That’s a pretty picture,” he replies about both the gonorrhea and the lesbian/prostitution fantasies. But then Catherine introduces another fantasy in which she cuts her hair and Frederic grows and dyes his so that they end up looking like each other, but with one blonde and the other dark. “Oh darling,” she says, “I want you so much I want to be you too.” “You are,” he replies, “we’re the same one.” “I know it,” Catherine responds. “At night we are.” “The nights are grand,” Frederic confirms (299). Although this might sound like the description of a symbiotic relationship, a merging of two harmonious souls into one as recommended by contemporary marriage manuals or as expressed in the *Book of Common Prayer*’s “Solemnization of Matrimony” ceremony with which Hemingway was familiar,¹³ there is, as James Mellow argues, “something ambivalent, even queer, in [this] description of the couple’s game playing” (382).

No, this isn’t *The Garden of Eden*, the novel Hemingway worked on late in his life but never finished, a novel featuring another Catherine, who inspires her husband to switch genders in bed, recommends a *ménage à trois*, and discovers that sex with another woman was what she wanted all along. However, there is more than an implication in *A Farewell to Arms* that gender transgressions and reversals of traditional male and female roles during sex lie beneath the androgynous fusion of two parts into one whole. “We live in a country where nothing makes any difference,” Catherine tells Frederic when he suggests it might be difficult to have a tail like a fox as she wishes (FTA 303), a recognition that their retreat to Switzerland is also a (temporary) escape from conventional rules and identities. Later that night, she decides that after the baby is born, she is going to cut her hair and “be a fine new and different girl for you.” Frederic agrees “it would be exciting,” and when she happily predicts that he’ll fall in love with her all over again, he replies that he loves her enough now. “What do you want to do? Ruin me?” “Yes. I want to ruin you,” she insists, to which he responds, “Good . . . that’s what I want too” (304–305). Clearly, the

gender experiments that Catherine proposes—cutting her hair in a time when short hair was more appropriate for men and might even be read as a sign of lesbianism and having Frederic grow his, which might be read as effeminacy¹⁴—are sexually charged for both characters.¹⁵ As Comley and Scholes note, “hair, in the Hemingway Text, functions as a visible sign of sexual transgression, a public challenge to public notions of sexual propriety that are both fragile and dangerously powerful—especially for those who have internalized them to the point of self-demonization for transgressions” (65).

Crossing the lines of conventional gender and sexual expectations, moving into the transgressive and the queer, inspires Catherine and Frederic’s nights and their desire for each other. Their desire is fueled not simply by the heterosexual merger of male and female, but also by a perversion of “normal” gender and sexual roles through a conflation of the Freudian notions of identification (the wish to be the other) and desire (the wish to have the other). Catherine wants Frederic so much she wants to be him, and Frederic agrees they are the same one. She desires him while also being him; he is her while also desiring her. Diana Fuss points out that for Freud, this kind of dynamic (desiring and wanting to be the other at the same time) is theoretically impossible because “desire for one sex [sexual object-choice] is always secured through identification with the other sex” (11). But Fuss joins other theorists in arguing that Freud’s distinction between desire and identification is a precarious one that not even he sustains throughout his work. Displacing this opposition “opens up a new way of thinking about the complexity of sexual identity formations outside the rigid thematic of cultural binaries” (Fuss 12). Catherine and Frederic’s recognition that they both desire and wish to be each other collapses the strict boundary between male and female, between heterosexual and homosexual. As Carl Eby notes in relation to some of Hemingway’s other works where similar identifications between the male and female protagonist are proposed (*Across the River and into the Trees*, *Islands in the Stream*, *The Garden of Eden*, *True at First Light*), the merger between lovers “threatens to become a reversal of roles” (81). Catherine and Frederic’s union is thus structured, simultaneously, around opposite-sex desire and same-sex desire.¹⁶

In addition, Catherine’s plan to be a “fine new and different girl” after giving birth, so that Frederic will fall in love with her all over again (*FTA*

304–305), establishes a paradox in which the self is present in the future but in a different form. Within this scenario, Frederic will love two women at the same time—the old Catherine, marked by her long hair, and the “new and different girl” who will be identified by her short hair. Frederic agrees that this fantasy is exciting, revealing that he is attracted to both the traditionally feminine Catherine and the more transgressive, “different” girl. Catherine also wants to be the blonde twin to Frederic’s dark one, another version of simultaneous difference and sameness, of loving the “same” but also the “opposite.” As she says, she wants them to be “all mixed up” (300). In these fantasies of exchange, replication, regeneration, confusion, and inversion, many forms of queerness come together—the homosexual, the transgendered, the illicit, the polygamous—all under the guise of heterosexual, monogamous union.

Ironically, a closer reading of this novel that has been called one of the classic love stories of our time reveals that so-called normal sexual relationships are not presented as the ideal or even the norm. But in a world where things are falling apart—men get blown up into bits so small their bodies cannot be recovered, soldiers fighting on the same side kill each other for no reason other than a rumor, medals of valor are given to those who are wounded while serving pasta and cheese, and “[a]bstract words such as glory, honor, courage, or hallow [are] obscene” (*FTA* 185)—what can one do but insist that the old morality be reassessed, that new rules be invented for building loving relationships which might outlast the chaos and embrace the complexities of human needs and desires? In a letter to Guy Hickok written about the time *A Farewell to Arms* was being prepared for publication (9 January 1929), Hemingway referred to the novel as a “long tale of transalpine fornication including the entire war in Italy.” A few weeks later (26 February 1929), he told Hickok that Scribner’s didn’t know “what the hell it’s about or they wouldn’t touch it. But it’s a swell book—I’m damned if it’s not” (qtd. in Mellow 377). As this essay has attempted to show, the book is not simply about the redemption of “transalpine fornication,” but the re-evaluation and the re-valuation of many other desires and behaviors that in the early 20th century, and even now, might be considered immoral and queer. Catherine sums it up well as she prepares to make love with Frederic in a hotel room decorated in red plush, filled with mirrors and a large bed with a satin coverlet, in a room decorated, in other words, for “vice” and transgressive sex: “I wish

we could do something really sinful. . . . Everything we do seems so innocent and simple. I can't believe we do anything wrong" (153).

NOTES

1. My thanks to Norman Jones for his excellent feedback on an earlier version of this essay. I want to also thank Sandra Spanier, Hester Blum, and Robin Shulze for the invitation to speak at Penn State University in Spring 2008, an engagement that led to the original formulation of the ideas in this essay.
2. Both Robert Trogdon and Scott Donaldson have examined the changes Scribner's requested of Hemingway as well as Perkins's own motives for supporting them, although only Trogdon mentions the request to remove Rinaldi's allusion to homosexuality.
3. The term "queer" has been assigned so many meanings since the rise of queer theory in the 1990s that its use often confuses readers more than it enlightens them. As Shannon Winnubst writes, "Reviewing theorists' attempt to define this term, 'queer,' quickly becomes a humorous enterprise. The discourses run the gamut from a vague sense of a younger generation's dissatisfactions with the categories of gay and lesbian to the intentional toying with the gender-sex-sexuality nexus to the vexed attempts to define that which (categorically?) resists definition" (134). I focus my use of the queer on that which is both abnormal (an unchallenged acceptance of society's sexual mores) and anti-normal (an intentional attempt to resist or revise society's sexual codes regarding the ab/normal) because these are the two modes of "the queer" that I see operating in Hemingway's novel.
4. Lesley A. Hall emphasizes that "few British sexologists [including Havelock Ellis, the one Hemingway read most fervently] were unthinking adherents, let alone uncomplicated champions, of conventional assumptions about sexual difference and hierarchy. They were on the margins of medical and scientific orthodoxy. . . . They were committed to promoting social change, and in favour of improving the position of women in society" (136).
5. Mark Spilka claims to be the first to recognize that Catherine takes the "top" position during those nights with Frederic in the hospital: "As no one has yet puzzled out, [Frederic] would have to lie on his back to perform properly, given the nature of his leg wounds, and Catherine would have to lie on top of him" (213).
6. Mary Gibson points out that state-regulated prostitution was allowed in Italy until 1958 when Italy joined other nations, such as Great Britain (1880s), France (1946), and the United States (1910s), in abolishing it (223).
7. Similarly, the British Social Hygiene Council was founded as the National Council for Combating Venereal Disease in 1916 (Weeks 211). Jeffrey Weeks points out that there was a public outcry in Great Britain in 1918 "when the government seemed willing to condone its soldiers' making use of *maisons tolérées* on the French Front. It was forced to place them out of bounds" (215).
8. As Charles Davenport wrote in 1911 in *Heredity in Relation to Eugenics*, a popular book that was used in college classrooms for many years, "Gonorrhea, like syphilis, is a parasitic disease that is commonly contracted during illicit sexual intercourse," and "sober-minded young women . . . are not attracted by the kind of men who are most prone to sex-immorality" (2).
9. Jeffrey Weeks notes that in Great Britain, Catherine's homeland, illegitimacy rates increased during the war, rising 30 percent by 1919 compared to pre-war figures and then stabilizing

- again by the mid-1920s. The fear of “war nymphomania,” as it was termed, created a moral panic and a flurry of press anxiety in Great Britain during the war years (208).
10. Hemingway may have read some of these manuals or at least known of their contents. According to Gioia Diliberto, he supposedly once told Allen Tate “that the number of orgasms available to a man was decided at birth and that a man should not make love too much in his youth, reserving some orgasms for middle age. This advice could have come straight from a marriage manual of the twenties” (110). His first wife, Hadley, also read a marriage manual before they were married and told Hemingway that she was “guzzling [it] today,” finding “some good stuff in it,” but deciding that much of it was “rather dictatorial.” “Think we’re crazy about each other to look out for one another if things aren’t good for us” (20 May 1921; qtd. in Diliberto 55).
 11. This is not to ignore the homosexual energy that circulates within homosocial settings. As Jonathan Dollimore points out, “homosexuality is strangely integral to the selfsame cultures which obsessively denounce it” (qtd. in Elliott 295). As I will discuss shortly, such a situation was acknowledged by sexologists of Hemingway’s time, including Havelock Ellis, who proposed that homosexual impulses might be encouraged, even temporarily, within same-sex spaces such as schools, the military, and certain occupations.
 12. Ellis’s work on sexual inversion was the subject of an obscenity trial.
 13. Part of the ceremony reads: “So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself: for no man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the Church: for we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife; and they two shall be one flesh.” I thank Susan Beegel for bringing this passage to my attention.
 14. Although he recognized that masculine men and feminine women might be homosexual, Havelock Ellis, like many other sexologists of his time, also argued that “In male inverts there is a frequent tendency to approximate to the feminine type and in female inverts to the masculine type; this occurs both in physical and in psychic respects, and though it may be traced in a considerable number of respects it is by no means always obtrusive” (*Psychology of Sex: A Manual for Students* 231).
 15. Compare Marc Hewson who states that Catherine “wants Frederic to explore with her the possibility of modulating their gendered selves by playing with the conventions that normally dictate the differences between men and women” (58). Hewson’s argument intersects mine in several ways, most significantly in his assertion that *A Farewell to Arms* explores how ideas of masculinity and femininity “were governed by early 20th century social values” and then imagines “ways beyond them” (54). My argument is also indebted to Daniel Traber’s reading of the novel which asserts that Catherine proposes to “rewrite her identity by integrating a subjectivity that would locate her beyond ‘normal’ gender patterns” (35).
 16. Making a similar argument but with different evidence and for a different purpose, Alex Vernon writes that “Hemingway hides homoeroticism in the least likely place: within the famous heterosexual relationship of Frederic Henry and Catherine Barkley” (71).

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