

*The Core Complex and the Field  
of Fetishistic Fantasy*

**Following the Fetish**

Everybody has strange things that mean things to them and we have to understand them.

—*The Garden of Eden* Manuscript

No other variation of the sexual instinct that borders on the pathological can lay so much claim to our interest as this one, such is the peculiarity of the phenomena to which it gives rise.

—Freud on fetishism in *Three Essays on Sexuality*

An entire book devoted to Hemingway's fetishism? What could possibly be so interesting and important about a mere quirk of a great author's sex life?

Such doubts are understandable, and they would be entirely reasonable if fetishism *were* a mere quirk of the fetishist's bedroom behavior. But there is much more to a fetish than first meets the eye. No mere erotic quirk, the fetish is not only an obligatory prop in a highly compulsive, fixated, and ritualized sexuality, it is simply the most obvious manifestation of a highly complex psychology, and it is the key to an entire realm of inter-related ideas, feelings, and attitudes that Mervin Glasser calls the fetishist's "core complex." This core complex is fundamental to Hemingway's fiction and finds expression through a set of recurrent, and highly personal, fantasies, themes, and symbols that are among the most prominent and important in Hemingway's art. The point of following the fetish is not to dwell on the

kinkiness of famous men, but rather to unlock the meaning of this entire field of fetishistic fantasy.

For the fetishist, the fetish is more than a sex toy; it "is an essential feature of his psychic stability, and much of his life revolves around it" (McDougall 54). Barbara Sheldon, in a subplot excised from the published version of *The Garden of Eden*, testifies to this aspect of the perversions and seems to speak for her creator when she admits that her fetishistic fantasies have taken possession of her and now "own" her entirely (K422.1 5.5.7). Likewise, in the published version of the novel, after Catherine Bourne first uses her fetishized hair to transvestically switch "sexes" with David, she asks her husband if he now thinks she's "wicked." "Of course not," he replies, but he wonders how long she has been thinking about such transformations. "Not all the time," she replies. "But quite a lot" (17). Catherine's fetishistic games soon dominate her life, and she repeatedly insists that they are not a matter of choice. She *has* to do these things and is powerless to do otherwise. Such fixity and compulsion are a hallmark of the psychoanalytic perversions, and we will eventually see that Ernest Hemingway was moved by precisely the same spirit.

As Sylvia Payne has observed, "A study of what the fetish means to the fetishist reveals that . . . every component of the infantile sexual instinct has some connection with the fetish object, so that this object is associated with all the repressed infantile sexual experiences" (166). It is this radical overdetermination of the fetish that makes it such a fascinating object of study and such a vital tool in the fetishist's regulation of his personal identity. Thanks to this overdetermination, Hemingway could use his fetish as an "all-purpose tool" to negotiate between identification and object choice, between love and aggression, between merger and separation, between narcissistic and oedipal desire, between heterosexuality and homosexuality, and between masculinity and femininity. The fetish was also a tool for negotiating transvestic and homeovestic behavior, and it was a monument to, and a tool for mending, a bisexual split in Hemingway's ego which both led to and was reinforced by his fetishism. Most importantly for Hemingway's readers, the overdetermined trajectory of the fetish object becomes a psychosexual thread uniting Hemingway's most ubiquitous themes and most insistent imagery.

Of course this very overdetermination has its disadvantages, too. Writing of Nick and Barbara Sheldon's tonsorial experiments in *The Garden of Eden* manuscript, Hemingway's fictional

writer, David Bourne, momentarily dismisses the topic as "banal enough," but he soon reconsiders, inventing a fine definition of overdetermination in the process: "It is all very well for you to write simply and the simpler the better. But do not start thinking so damned simply. *Know how complicated it is and then state it simply*" (my emphasis, K422.1 4.3.1).<sup>1</sup> I only wish I could do the same, but the artist, alone, can enjoy this simplicity of expression.

While the overdetermination of the fetish object allows the artist to express psychological complexity with an exquisite economy and clarity, it falls to the critic to unpack this complexity for those who would try not just to feel, but to understand it and, through understanding it, to feel it all the more fully.<sup>2</sup> I fear being taken for Emily Dickinson's bloody-fingered ornithologist who would split the lark to find its song; yet to use a different analogy, while *Gray's Anatomy* certainly lacks the beauty and complexity of the human body, anatomy nevertheless remains an essential field of study for anyone who would claim to understand the body's full complexity and beauty. Symbols, as invitations to interpretation, are always more meaningful and economical than any interpretation we can give them, but interpret them we must if we are to appreciate their richness. This is particularly the case with the fetish object. Its very richness and its connection to every aspect of Hemingway's psychosexuality hinder any attempt to explore it in a linear fashion and render almost anything said about it only partially satisfactory even from the limited position of psychoanalytic understanding, but this overdetermination also makes it a key generator of meaning within Hemingway's texts. Fetishistic overdetermination lurks like a land mine just beneath the surface of Hemingway's fictional icebergs, explosively destabilizing simplistic conceptions of gender identity, of the ego, of desire, and of homo- and heterosexuality. Like the munitions experts who clean up after a bomb, we can understand the fetishistic mechanism only by painstakingly examining the composition and trajectory of its innumerable shards.

Some readers probably suspect that too much has been written about Hemingway's fetishism already. After all, nearly thirty years ago Carlos Baker recognized that Hemingway's obsession with hair was "a special psychic quirk" worthy of a few paragraphs in his classic biography (646), and every major Hemingway biographer since then has given the topic at least cursory attention. James Mellow notes that Hemingway "had a

lifelong erotic fascination with women's hair" (73). Jeffrey Meyers devotes a fine four-page subchapter to Hemingway's "hair fetishism" (437), though he never develops the matter any further than enumerating the most obvious examples of it. Michael Reynolds notes that hair was "a fetish present in [Hemingway's] fiction and private life" (*Young Hemingway* 120). And Kenneth Lynn devotes a considerable portion of his biography to Hemingway's obsession with hair. For some reason Lynn scrupulously avoids using the word "fetish," but he rightly ties Hemingway's obsession with hair to his childhood experience of being cross-dressed by a mother who alternately thought of him as a boy and a girl, and who "twinned" him with his older sister, Marcelline. Yet Lynn never explores the deeper implications of Hemingway's fetishism, and consequently the answers he arrives at, while not strictly incorrect, are far too simple.

Two critical studies, Comley and Scholes's *Hemingway's Genders* and Spilka's *Hemingway's Quarrel with Androgyny*, have recently tried to develop the critical implications of Ernest's erotic fascination with hair, but both books are overtly hostile to psychoanalysis. Spilka, who has explored Hemingway's tonsorial fixation at greatest length, uses the term "fetishism" (281), and is certainly on track when he claims that "hair was for Hemingway the public expression of his own private obsession with androgyny. . ." (291), but he never explores fetishism in its Freudian or post-Freudian sense, in spite of the fact that fetishism is perhaps one of the most interesting and well-understood areas of psychoanalytic theory. Like Lynn, Spilka sees Hemingway's taste for lovers with matching hair largely as a simple re-enactment of his twin-like relationship with Marcelline and as an attempt to come to terms with the more traditionally "feminine" aspects of himself, an interpretation which isn't entirely off-base, but which fails to unearth the riches of the fetish object's significance. So while many words have already been devoted to Hemingway's fetishism, curiously none of them have been written by anyone who knows anything about the subject of fetishism.

Yet since so many Hemingway scholars can agree on a "symptom," the value of any psychoanalytic approach to Hemingway should stand or fall by what it can tell us about this symptom and its importance to Hemingway's work. Much more than a translation of Lynn's and Spilka's observations into psychoanalytic jargon, a psychoanalytic reading of Hemingway's fetishism will develop a more theorizable approach to Heming-

way's connection between tonsorial experiments and transvestic transformations. It will, likewise, develop a theorizable thread uniting major themes and images in Hemingway's fiction. It will reveal what is at stake in Hemingway's explorations of gender. It will clarify the connection between Hemingway's overt male homophobia and his elements of latent homosexuality. It will connect Hemingway's fetishism with previous oedipal readings of his work. It will allow us to see the influence of Hemingway's psychosexual concerns in subtle places that would otherwise be overlooked. It will suggest how these concerns express themselves in the *structure* of Hemingway's work, not just in the iceberg principle, but in the insistent doubling and dividing of characters that so typifies his later fiction. In short, if the value of a psychoanalytic reading will stand or fall according to what it can tell us about Hemingway's fetishism and its significance, I feel quite comfortable that stand it will.

Given my acknowledgment that Hemingway's erotic fascination with hair is well-recognized, the compilation of evidence that I will offer in support of this fact in the next section may initially strike some as unnecessary. My reasons for cataloging it, however, are threefold. First, I want to convey just how obsessive this topic was for Hemingway, and here there is no substitute for letting the author speak for himself. Second, I want to explore a few of the effects that this obsession produces on us as readers. Third, my unique approach to Hemingway's fetishism will influence my selection of evidence; my point is not simply that Hemingway fetishized hair, but rather that this fetish is linked to an entire field of fantasy within Hemingway's work. The evidence I offer will begin to define this field of fantasy for us and will serve as touchstones for subsequent analyses.

### "Our Things"

No decent girls had ever had their hair cut short like that in this part of the country and even in Paris it was rare and strange and could be beautiful or could be very bad. It could mean too much or it could only mean showing the beautiful shape of a head that could never be shown as well.

From the hospital bed where she lies dying at the end of *A Farewell to Arms*, Catherine Barkley implores Frederic Henry, "You won't do our things with another girl, or say the same things, will you?" (331). Grief-stricken, Frederic swears that he never will, and when the novel ends a few pages later with his failed attempt to say good-bye to a body that now seems as cold as a statue, Frederic's eternal faithfulness is assured. Like the bold lover frozen on Keats's Grecian urn, Frederic, except in his role as the implied author of the novel, simply *has* no future; true to his promise to his dying love, he never has another girl.

Yet, somehow, Catherine's fears may indeed be justified. Insofar as Frederic partakes of those qualities that unify almost all of Hemingway's male protagonists—qualities which emanate primarily from an element of himself that Hemingway projected into most of his heroes—insofar as *part* of Frederic *does* live again in Jake Barnes, Robert Jordan, Richard Cantwell, Thomas Hudson, and David Bourne, he seems to be less than faithful to his promise. Yet if Frederic, or a part of him, lives again in Hemingway's other novels, perhaps Catherine didn't really die that rainy evening in Switzerland—at least not entirely.

Just exactly what "our things" *are* isn't entirely clear from the text, but they seem to involve the tonsorial experiments and almost mystical union that preoccupy Catherine and Frederic during the alpine idyll in the final chapters of the novel. Nowhere are these "things" clearer than during Catherine's after-lunch conversation with Frederic a few days before Christmas. In playful, loving banter, Catherine suggests that Frederic grow a beard, which he agrees to do. Then, after telling Frederic that she wishes she had slept with all of his past lovers and even wishes she had had gonorrhoea so she could be exactly like him, "Cat" proposes another way to achieve this mystical fusion of identities:

"Darling, why don't you let your hair grow?"

"How grow?"

"Just grow a little longer."

"It's long enough now."

"No, let it grow a little longer and I could cut mine and we'd be just alike only one of us blonde and one of us dark."

"I wouldn't let you cut yours."

"It would be fun. I'm tired of it. It's an awful nuisance in the bed at night."

"I like it."

"Wouldn't you like it short?"

"I might. I like it the way it is."

"It might be nice short. Then we'd both be alike. Oh, darling, I want you so much I want to be you too."

"You are. We're the same one."

"I know it. At night we are."

"The nights are grand."

"I want us to be all mixed up. I don't want you to go away. . . . You go if you want to. But hurry right back. Why, darling, I don't live at all when I'm not with you." (299-300)

With an irony that becomes clear only with Catherine's death, Frederic promises that he "won't ever go away." "I'm no good when you're not there," he tells her. "I haven't any life at all any more" (300). He then asks if Catherine wants him to continue with the beard, in spite of her desire to be exactly like him. "Go on," she replies. "Grow it. It will be exciting" (300).

There is something magical in the two lovers who can talk endlessly about the length of their hair while a war of almost apocalyptic proportions rages all around them—even if it seems a little odd that they find such matters so "exciting." The final book of the novel, up until the stillbirth and Catherine's death, takes place in a sylvan, snowbound dreamtime with only the slightest hints of the horrors beyond their little world. In fact, when Catherine and Frederic first arrive in neutral Switzerland, they both fear that, like Peyton Farquhar's escape from Union soldiers in Ambrose Bierce's classic story "An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge," their own escape from the war is merely a dream and they are liable to wake up at any moment and find themselves driving Frederic back to the *stazione* in Milan. In Bierce's tale, Farquhar's miraculous dream-escape downriver into the waiting arms of his wife initially seduces inattentive readers only to shock them all the more profoundly when it is revealed as an illusion by the snap of Farquhar's neck and the swaying of his body beneath Owl Creek Bridge. Likewise, the dreamlike peace in the final chapters of Hemingway's novel, coming as it does after the horrors of the retreat from Caporetto with Frederic's Farquhar-like escape from murderous battle police and plunge into the swollen Piave, lulls the unsuspecting reader into the complacent illusion that a "separate peace" is possible, that death and the harsh world can be escaped—an illusion which by contrast renders the ultimate death of Catherine and her child absolutely shattering. Even the attentive reader, who discovers

the theme of stillbirth in the novel's first chapter with the men marching with ammunition bulging under their capes "as though they were six months gone with child" and who therefore expects an unhappy end to Catherine's pregnancy, cannot help but feel the contrast between the idyll in Switzerland and tragic loss of the novel's final pages (4). Likewise, the erotic fusion of Catherine and Frederic into a single symbiotic identity, each symbolically incapable of functioning without the other, makes Frederic's loss at the end of the novel all the more tragic. This fusion, moreover, is achieved largely through the sharing of fantasy-laden secrets and erotic activities—the "our things" of Catherine's plea.

The keeping and sharing of secrets was one of Hemingway's favorite tools for forging intense bonds between his fictional characters and between himself and his wives. We see it at work, for instance, in the relationship between Jake and Montoya in *The Sun Also Rises*:

[Montoya] always smiled as though bull-fighting were a very special secret between the two of us; a rather shocking but really very deep secret that we knew about. He always smiled as though there were something lewd about the secret to outsiders, but that it was something that we understood. It would not do to expose it to people who would not understand. (131)

(Jake, of course, betrays this secret by introducing the *corrida* to the likes of Cohn and Mike, an act which mirrors the betrayal of Montoya implicit in his role as matchmaker between Brett and Romero after having promised Montoya to protect the young matador from predatory foreign women. As in *A Farewell to Arms*, the intensity of the bond accentuates the loss implied by its dissolution.) In *Across the River and Into the Trees*, we find this same sort of secret-sharing in the bond between Cantwell and the *Maitre d'Hotel* of the Gritti who invent the fictitious secret society "El Ordine Militar, Nobile y Espirituoso de los Caballeros de Brusadelli" (56).<sup>3</sup> The secret—whose contents by nature tend to be "either something highly prized or something shameful which must be hidden," or a combination of *both*—works its magic by delineating a contrast between a world of "outsiders" and a very select community of those "in the know." As Phyllis Greenacre notes, "If it is shared, then its joint owners must be held together by some special and primitive ritual bond, or the secret is in danger of becoming only common property" (190).



A sort of secret-sharing not entirely unlike this was a mainstay of Hemingway's art. Thematically, Hemingway loved to share "secrets" with his readers—literary gossip, special drink recipes, hints about where to travel, what wines to order, how to fish and hunt properly, how to enjoy a bullfight or boxing match, how to blow a bridge. When Robert Jordan ponders the knowledge of clandestine Spanish Republican politics that constitutes his status as an "insider" at Gaylord's, Hemingway transforms his readers into "insiders" by proxy (FWBT 229). Likewise, when Hemingway describes the ignorant "Biarritz crowd" in *The Sun Also Rises*, he elicits our indignation at their stupidity in failing to appreciate Romero's bravery or technique in fighting a color-blind bull, deftly baiting the animal with his body, then switching to the cape. "What's he afraid of the bull for? The bull's so dumb he only goes after the cloth," one asks. And with what can now appear to us only as utter idiocy, his companion replies, "He's just a young bull-fighter. He hasn't learned it yet" (218). Skillfully, Hemingway paints the Biarritz crowd as a hopeless bunch of "outsiders," and we, who may not have known a jot about bullfighting before picking up his novel, are invited to sit in judgment above them as privileged "insiders." Thus in *The Garden of Eden* manuscript, when David Bourne speaks of a "mystère" at the heart of his work and claims that he cares about the opinions of only those few readers who know what he is writing about or who at least know about writing, he seems to be speaking for Hemingway, defining a select community of ideal readers—a happy few amongst whom we inevitably must number ourselves (K422.1 37.20.4th insert).<sup>4</sup>

Stylistically, a sort of secret-sharing is implied by Hemingway's fondness for using pronouns or definite articles without clear referents, and, structurally, secret-sharing lies at the heart of Hemingway's "iceberg principle"—his contention that the emotional movement of his stories is determined by the weightier content which lurks beneath the surface of the text: "If a writer of prose knows enough about what he is writing about he may omit things that he knows and the reader, if the writer is writing truly enough, will have a feeling of those things as strongly as though the writer had stated them" (DIA 192). Thus Hemingway's implied ideal reader knows, or feels, that the unnamed operation in "Hills Like White Elephants" is an abortion and that Nick in "Big Two-Hearted River" has just returned from the First World War even though these things are never explicitly

stated in the texts. The reader is moved by a sense of mystery and a sort of epistemophilia, an "urge to know." Hemingway, by contrast, assumes the mantle of "the one who knows." As a highly conscious artist, Hemingway understood that the subtle sharing of these "secrets" brings his ideal reader into an unusually intimate relation with the text and its implied author.

As the "our things" of *A Farewell to Arms* imply, however, secret-sharing, with its implied distinction between a ritually or primitively-bonded "us" and an alienated "them," also formed a mainstay of Hemingway's erotic imagination. But while Cantwell allows Renata to join "*El Ordine*" and Jake successfully initiates Brett to the bullfight, the secrets shared by Hemingway's fictional lovers and the secrets he shared with his wives were generally of another sort.<sup>5</sup> Hemingway shared identical fetishistically-invested pet names with all of his wives, and in his relationships with Hadley and Pauline, both of whom at times sported boyish haircuts nearly identical to his own, he spoke repeatedly about his lover and himself being the "same guy."<sup>6</sup> In letters to Pauline, Hemingway writes of a feeling of "us against the world"—a phrase we find mirrored in *The Garden of Eden* when Catherine uses her fetishistic experiments with haircutting and suntanning to take herself and David "further away from other people," telling her husband, "We're us against all the others" (*SL* 221; *GE* 30; 37). But while the women in Hemingway's life and fiction changed, the fantasies and secrets uniting lovers almost never did. There is a remarkable uniformity to the "secrets, taboos, and delights" that Hemingway shared with Hadley in the '20s, the "secrets" and "tribal rules" that David Bourne shares with Catherine and Marita in *The Garden of Eden*, the "jollities and secrecies" that Ernest shared with his fourth wife, Mary, in the late '40s, and the "our things" of Fred-eric and Catherine in *A Farewell to Arms*.<sup>7</sup>

As Freud and Greenacre have suggested—and, indeed, as Hemingway's life and fiction also suggest—there is an intimate connection between fetishism and "secret-keeping."<sup>8</sup> Thus, in *The Garden of Eden* manuscript, when Barbara Sheldon first dreams up her erotic games, she proposes to Nick, "Let's think of something fun to do that we've never done that will be secret and wicked. . . ." and when she smiles at David Bourne in a Paris restaurant, she does so because she has already seen him in a barbershop and regards him as "a co-conspirator." Barbara defines her "conspiracy," then, as a fetishistic and transvestic

obsession with hair—and no wonder. The fetish is a sort of secret shared between lovers, highly prized but sometimes also invoking an element of shame. Even though, as we shall see, fetishism can indicate a deeply riven ego-structure and can be tied indirectly to tremendous anxiety in the fetishist's life, it is almost never the presenting "symptom" in a clinical setting.<sup>9</sup> Rather than regarding the fetish as a symptom, the fetishist feels that he enjoys an "advantage" in his erotic life. "The meaning of the fetish is not known to other people, so the fetish is not withheld from him: it is easily accessible and he can readily obtain the sexual satisfaction attached to it" (Freud, *SE XXI*, 154). It is the consistency of this fetishistic secret and the *field of fantasy surrounding it*—a field of fantasy involving an insistence upon "first loves" and a sensation that the protagonist is somehow haunted by his past—which lends an air of *déjà vu* to the romances in Hemingway's work. Like souls forever united in love and reincarnated into different bodies in some Saturday matinee vampire movie, Catherine Barkley and Frederic Henry seem to reappear throughout Hemingway's fiction in various guises. It is as if the idyll in the final chapters of *A Farewell to Arms* were not only a dream, but a recurrent one.

True, in *For Whom the Bell Tolls* Robert Jordan is an instructor of Spanish, not an architect like Frederic Henry (not that Frederic's status as an architect is in any way convincing or important to *Farewell*)—but the two men seem to possess the same "erotic soul," albeit in different bodies under different circumstances. And while Maria, a young Spanish woman raped by the fascists and left with shorn hair, may have little in common with the English nurse Catherine Barkley, she does fantasize about nursing her wounded warrior: "When thou art wounded I will care for thee and dress thy wound and wash thee and feed thee—" (171). Moreover, she shares a remarkably similar taste for the erotic fusion of identities. "We will be as one animal of the forest and be so close that neither one can tell that one of us is one and not the other," she promises Jordan, asking him:

"Can you not feel my heart be your heart?"

"Yes. There is no difference."

"Now, feel. I am thee and thou art me and all of one is the other. And I love thee, oh, I love thee so. Are we not truly one? Canst thou not feel it?"

"Yes," he said. "It is true." (262)

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If this merging of identities doesn't seem hauntingly familiar, Jordan's fantasies about what to do with Maria's cropped hair should certainly leave us with the eerie sensation that we've been here before. There is, however, an important difference. Identical haircuts are now proposed by the man in the relationship, not by some more safely dissociated half-crazy woman:

"I have thought about thy hair," [Jordan] said. "And what we can do about it. You see it grows now all over thy head the same length like the fur of an animal and it is lovely to feel and I love it very much and it is beautiful and it flattens and rises like a wheatfield in the wind when I pass my hand over it."

"Pass thy hand over it."

He did and left his hand there and went on talking to her throat, as he felt his own throat swell. "But in Madrid I thought we could go together to the coiffeur's and they could cut it neatly on the sides and in the back as they cut mine and that way it would look better in the town while it is growing out."

"I would look like thee," she said and held him close to her. "And then I would never want to change it." (345)

That Jordan's interest in Maria's hair involves more than a dispassionate concern for the latest trends in fashion should already be obvious, but the wave of fantasy that overtakes him when he begins to talk about Maria's hair reveals just how deeply he feels about these matters:

Now the making believe was coming back in a great rush and he would take it all to him. It had him now, and again he surrendered and went on. "So it will hang straight to thy shoulders and curl at the ends as a wave of the sea curls, and it will be the color of ripe wheat and thy face the color of burnt gold and thine eyes the only color they could be with thy hair and thy skin, gold with the dark flecks in them, and I will push thy head back and look in thy eyes and hold thee tight against me—" (346).

An erotic pattern repeated once or twice might mean little enough, but the "erotic souls" of Frederic and Catherine are "reincarnated" once again, a bit more thoroughly disguised, in *Across the River and Into the Trees*. As if to make a specific point about this "reincarnation," Hemingway even has Colonel Cantwell, who like Jordan was in Spain for the Civil War, defecate on the very site where he, Frederic Henry, and Ernest Hemingway

were all wounded at Fossalta di Piave in the First World War.<sup>10</sup> And while on the erotic front Cantwell never expresses any desire to cut Renata's long, beautiful, raven hair to match his own (perhaps because the fifty year-old author imagined his fifty year-old protagonist with his own thinning hair<sup>11</sup>), he does plainly fetishize her hair, and Renata knows it. When she combs her hair in front of the mirror, for instance, she offers to let Cantwell watch, and the authorial voice tells us, "She was not combing it for vanity, nor *to do to the Colonel what she knew it could and would do*" (my emphasis, 112). Moreover, in a dream of erotic fusion, Renata pleads with Cantwell, "I want to be like you. Can I be like you a little while tonight?" (142). Later, as they make love in a gondola, Renata's hair whipping about in the wind, she asks, "Don't you know how a woman feels?" "No," Cantwell replies. "Only what you tell me." Renata responds by doing something cryptic, which is apparently meant to give him a better idea, and then says, "Guess now" (154). The theme is picked up again a few pages later when Renata tells Cantwell, "Please hold me very tightly so we can be a part of each other for a little while."

"We can try," the Colonel said.

"Couldn't I be you?"

"That's awfully complicated. We could try of course."

"I'm you now," she said. (156)

In *To Have and Have Not*, Harry Morgan urges Marie to keep her bleached hair short, and in *Islands in the Stream*, Hemingway recreates his favorite erotic pattern even more obviously in Thomas Hudson's dream of his ex-wife—a dream which should shock us for the violence implicit in Hudson's "holstering" of his "gun" while reminding us of Frederic Henry's comparatively innocent pleasure at taking the pins out of Catherine Barkley's hair as she lies on top of him, letting her hair cascade over his face like a silken tent:

Her hair hung down and lay heavy and silky on his eyes and on his cheeks and he turned his lips away from her searching ones and took the hair in his mouth and held it. Then with one hand he moistened the .357 Magnum and slipped it easily and sound asleep where it should be. Then he lay under her weight with her silken hair over his face like a curtain and moved slowly and rhythmically. (ITS 343-4)<sup>12</sup>

And once again, the hair fetish leads directly to a dream of erotic fusion. After Hudson asks his dream-wife, "Who's going to make love to who?" she replies with a question of her own, "Should I be you or you be me?"

"You have first choice."

"I'll be you."

"I can't be you. But I can try."

"It's fun. You try it. Don't try to save yourself at all. Try to lose everything and take everything too. . . . Are you doing it?"

"Yes," he said. "It's wonderful. . . ."

"Will you give up everything? Are you glad . . . that I come and be a devil in the night?"

"Yes. I'm glad of everything and will you swing your hair across my face and give me your mouth please and hold me so tight it kills me?"

"Of course. And you'll do it for me?" (344-5)

This recurrent fantasy takes a bizarre twist in Hemingway's long, unfinished, posthumous, short story, "The Last Good Country." Having killed a deer out of season, Nick Adams and his little sister, who insists on accompanying him, flee from game wardens to a "secret place" in one of the last remaining stands of virgin hemlock in the Michigan woods, a very old and "Indian" place which Nick had never shared with anyone else (CSS 515). Twelve year-old Littless, who accompanies her brother partly to keep him from being lonely, partly to keep him from killing someone, and partly out of a jealous need to keep him from running off with his pregnant Indian girlfriend, possesses fetishistic properties generally reserved for the adult love interests in Hemingway's work—"tanned dark brown" skin and "dark brown hair with yellow streaks in it from the sun" which Nick enjoys stroking (CSS 504). Early in the story, Littless, who "always wanted to be a boy anyway," proposes to make their escape easier by cutting her hair to look like a boy (CSS 505), and after Nick returns from fishing one day she has a "surprise" for him:

"What did you do, you monkey? . . ."

"I cut it off," she said.

"How?"

"With a scissors. How did you think? . . . . Do I look like a boy?"

"Like a wild boy of Borneo. . . ."

"It's very exciting," she said. "Now I'm your sister but I'm a boy, too. Do you think it will change me into a boy?"

"No."

"I wish it would."

"You're crazy, Littless."

"Maybe I am." (CSS 531)

Nick offers to touch it up for her but likes her new haircut "very much" (CSS 531), and Littless, whom Nick calls "devil," then begins studying how to be a "boy" by taking her idolized brother as a template.

It may be tempting to discount any similarity between Littless's boyish haircut and the boyish cut that Brett Ashley refuses to grow out to look more "womanly" at the end of *The Sun Also Rises*. Littless's tonsorial preoccupations, in spite of the "excitement" she associates with them, probably seem more tomboyish than fetishistic. Yet it becomes more difficult to see her haircut as entirely childish and innocent in light of the story's glaringly incestuous undertones. Littless clearly substitutes in some ways for Nick's Indian girlfriend, Trudy, and we are told that she "and Nick loved each other and they did not love the others. They always thought of everyone else in the family as the others" (CSS 504). After Nick watches his little sister sleeping, noting that "it look[ed] as though someone had cut her hair off on a wooden block with an ax," Hemingway writes that Nick "loved his sister very much and she loved him too much. But, he thought, I guess those things straighten out" (CSS 535). And we see just how much straightening out is needed when Littless tells her brother that she plans to become his common-law wife someday. For obvious reasons, Nick can't agree to his sister's plan, but Littless isn't easily dissuaded: "I've got another scheme. We'll have a couple of children while I'm a minor. Then you'll have to marry me under the Unwritten Law" (CSS 537).

In spite of Hemingway's preoccupation with incest in this story, Mark Spilka calls Littless's talk "innocent prattle," and he has a point (270). No one, except perhaps Littless, really expects Nick and his sister to consummate their relationship, and such infatuations are a common part of childhood. But Spilka wrongly uses this "innocent prattle" to argue specifically against psychoanalysis. Our rush to note the story's "barely sublimated incest," he argues,

suggests how unthinkingly we still operate under the post-Victorian, that is to say, Freudian, dispensation. We are so embarrassed, apparently, by any genuine expression of affection, or any playful testing of limits, that we can only assign it to sentimentality or neurosis. . . . It is not the 'verge of incest' that Hemingway treads in this decidedly revealing story; it is the frontier of childhood affections, rather, which the completely open issue of incest helps to outline. (270)

No doubt the story is partly about tender childhood affections, but Spilka's dichotomy is too easy, final, and ultimately misleading. There is also a *perverse* (as opposed to *neurotic*) component to Nick's relationship with his sister which is simply not at odds with the issue of these childhood affections.

As Hemingway realized in *A Moveable Feast*, "All things truly wicked start from an innocence" (210), and in this story both children know that their affections are no longer *entirely* innocent. In the manuscript Littleless betrays an awareness of the social sanctions against incest when she asks, "It isn't dirty for a brother and sister to love each other, is it?" (qtd. in Spilka 269). And Nick, who is associated with "original sin," goes to the wilderness in the first place because he is fleeing from *The Law*, and as the story comes to its abrupt conclusion he is terribly anxious about being caught.<sup>13</sup> It is this recognition of lost innocence which suggests why an escape to an Edenic garden cannot succeed. Nick and Littleless may find the last patch of virgin wilderness, an "Indian place," but in their minds at least they can never escape "civilized" law; after the recognition of "original sin" and "wickedness," a pre-sexual Edenic innocence can never again be imagined from a position of such innocence and is therefore constituted as always-already-lost. As much as the loss of childhood freedom and the American wilderness, *this* is the loss which haunts the story, much as it haunts Hemingway's posthumous novel *The Garden of Eden*.

If in "The Last Good Country" we smile at Littleless's fantasy that a haircut can magically transform her into a boy, making her simultaneously Nick's *brother* and *sister*, and we don't take her "craziness" very seriously, these things nevertheless take on an entirely new dimension when we read this story against *The Garden of Eden*. In this work, written at much the same time as "The Last Good Country," Hemingway's fantasies about haircutting, hair dyeing, sexual transformation, and the erotic fusion of



identities reach their culmination and form nearly the entire subject matter of the book.

Honeymooning in the South of France, the young lovers David and Catherine Bourne—who look enough alike to be brother and sister—exist at the beginning of the novel in a world of continual orgiastic bliss with “only the happiness and loving each other and then hunger and replenishing and starting over” (14). With the rather odd aside that there was “no badness” after he makes love to his wife, David is sitting in a café thinking that “they could not be held tighter together than they were now,” when Catherine walks through the door with the first of her many tonsorial experiments and says “in her throaty voice, ‘Hello darling’” (14).

Her hair was cropped as short as a boy's. It was cut with no compromises. It was brushed back, heavy as always, but the sides were cut short and the ears that grew close to her head were clear and the tawny line of her hair was cropped close to her head. . . . She turned her head and lifted her breasts and said, ‘Kiss me please.’”

He kissed her and looked at her face and at her hair and he kissed her again.

“Do you like it? Feel how smooth. Feel it in back,” she said.

He felt it in back. . . .

“You see,” she said. “That’s the surprise. I’m a girl. But now I’m a boy too and I can do anything and anything and anything. (14–15)

Catherine knows her “surprise” is “dangerous,” she explains, but she tells David that they don’t have “to go by everyone else’s rules. We’re us.” He isn’t sure that the “surprise” is such a good idea and clearly feels threatened, but Catherine knows her husband well: “You do like it. I can feel and I can tell. . . . It isn’t faked or phony. It’s a true boy’s haircut and not from any beauty shop.” When David asks who cut it, Catherine’s reply is telling:

“The coiffeur at Aigues Mortes. The one who cut your hair a week ago. You told him how you wanted yours cut then and I told him to cut mine just the same as yours. He was very nice and wasn’t at all surprised. He wasn’t worried at all. He said exactly like yours? And I said exactly. Doesn’t it *do* anything to you, David?”

“Yes,” he said. (my emphasis, 15–16)

Just what it *does* to Catherine and David we find out that night when they make love. David is holding Catherine's breasts, "feeling the hard erect freshness between his fingers," when Catherine asks him to feel her "new surprise," her hair. A bizarre metamorphosis then begins which brings David "closer" to Catherine than he had ever imagined possible:

He lay there and felt something and then her hand holding him and searching lower and he helped with his hands and lay back in the dark and did not think at all and only felt the weight and the strangeness inside and she said, "Now you can't tell who is who can you?"

"No."

"You are changing," she said. "Oh you are. You are. Yes you are and you're my girl Catherine. Will you change and be my girl and let me take you?"

"You're Catherine."

"No I'm Peter. You're my wonderful Catherine. You're my beautiful lovely Catherine. You were so good to change. Oh thank you, Catherine, so much. Please understand. Please know and understand. I'm going to make love to you forever." (17)

These fetishistic and transvestic adventures become more and more obsessive for Catherine as the novel progresses, and David's feelings about them become ever more divided. When they cease to be merely "things of the night" and spill over into the daylight with Catherine wandering through the Prado as a "boy," David suffers from acute "remorse." But later, after Catherine gets him to cut and lighten his hair to match her own, he stands in front of the mirror looking at himself and realizes that he *likes* it:

"So that's how it is," he said to himself. "You've done that to your hair and had it cut the same as your girl's and how do you feel?" He asked the mirror. "How do you feel? Say it."

"You like it," he said.

He looked in the mirror and it was someone else he saw but it was less strange now.

"All right. You like it," he said. "Now go through with the rest of it whatever it is and don't ever say anyone tempted you or that anyone bitched you." (84)

Soon after this in the heavily edited Scribner's version of the novel a new girl appears on the scene, more compliant and lack-

ing Catherine's jealousy of David's work or Catherine's urge to be a boy. After a short *ménage à trois* where both share the new woman, Catherine burns David's stories, goes insane, and leaves her husband alone with the idolizing new girl, Marita. Hemingway's manuscript, however, suggests that he intended something quite different. In addition to an entire subplot about another couple, the Sheldons (based largely on Hemingway and Hadley), who live in Paris and *grow* their hair out identically, we find quite a different Marita. Here she simply becomes another Catherine. Like her mentor, she grows obsessed with cutting her hair, tanning her skin, and trying to be a boy. And she isn't so compliant. She wishes *she* had been the one to bleach David's hair. Most importantly, Hemingway's "provisional ending" to the novel concludes not with the union of David and Marita, but with David and Catherine together on the beach contemplating the ultimate fusion, or disintegration, of identities—a double suicide.

After this catalogue of lovers, it should hardly come as a surprise when I say that the possession of the fetish object provides a unifying link between all of the significant women in Hemingway's life and fiction.<sup>14</sup> Writing of Ernest's request that she bleach her hair as a present to him and of his "entrancement" with the results, Mary Hemingway notes in her memoir, *How It Was*: "Deeply rooted in his field of esthetics was some mystical devotion to blondness, the blonder the lovelier, I never learned why" (170). But Hemingway wasn't devoted simply to blonde hair. It could be blonde, red, raven black; it could be long or short. But it was *always* fetishized. Thus, in *Islands in the Stream*, when young Tom jokes that "the same girl" appears in all of the books by Mr. Davis (largely a Hemingway cognate), Tom may distance himself from the observation by saying he was only teasing, but Audrey—herself a representative of "that same girl" who in some measure appears in all of Mr. Hemingway's books—is savvy enough to say, "I thought it was a little bit accurate" (175).

Of course, Hemingway's female characters are *not* all identical. Surely the Indian girl, Prudy Boulton, differs from the sophisticated denizen of Montparnasse, Lady Brett Ashley. What does the wealthy Margot Macomber have in common with the vulnerable and violated Maria of *For Whom the Bell Tolls* or the working-class ex-prostitute, Marie Morgan? Yet there is an un-

canny similarity as well. To claim along with Leslie Fiedler that there simply *are* no women in Hemingway's fiction would be unjust. Hemingway was clearly capable of feeling a profound sympathy with women. Thus, when Jake Barnes broods to himself in his Pamplona hotel room, "To hell with women, anyway," he follows this with the recognition that he had not been thinking about their side of the situation: "I thought I had paid for everything. Not like the woman pays and pays and pays" (SAR 148). In fact, Hemingway's profound identification with women—an identification *far* more profound and agonistic than has hitherto been realized—will be a major theme of this book. Yet, in part *because* of this very identification, Hemingway's women are always infused with aspects of masculine desire and fantasy. And as we shall see, on some psychosexual level intimately tied to their possession of the fetish object, Hemingway's women, as Fiedler realized, aren't really women at all.

But why must all of Hemingway's heroines possess the fetish object? Phyllis Greenacre's rather clinical definition of fetishism begins to offer us some insight into this question, even though it begs questions of its own:

Fetishism generally appears as a distortion of sexual behavior in which there is the obligatory use of some nongenital object as part of the sexual act and without which gratification cannot be obtained. The fetish usually must possess qualities representing, in only slightly concealed form, body parts and body attributes. Articles of leather such as shoes, gloves, thongs; articles of clothing closely associated with the body, such as underwear; braids of hair and wigs—these all have the common fetishistic properties. Furthermore, the fetish must be something that is visible, tangible, inanimate, invested with body odors, and not easily destructible. (301)

(One may wonder how indestructibility applies to hair, but Mary Hemingway told Carlos Baker that her husband's "interest in the sexual connotations of hair was all the greater because he thought it the one part of a woman's anatomy that could be changed for fun and without permanent damage" [qtd. in Baker 646].)

Simply put, Hemingway needed the fetish object to attain sexual gratification. Thus, he quite literally could not conceive of a lover or a romantic scene without its active presence. The connection between the fetish object and the act of sex is ubiquitous