Hemingway dealt neither Jake Barnes nor Frederic Henry a pleasant fate. And I have certainly not dealt them a better one, regarding them less favorably than most Hemingway critics. They mistakenly applaud Jake, impressed by his ability to cope with his sexual impairment, by his superiority to most of his friends, and by his putdown of Lady Brett. They also mistake Frederic. But that is understandable. After all, he, too, is confused—having been christened with two first names befuddles one’s self-concept. Even more, people in his story are confused about his identity. The aid-station surgeon who treats his injuries acknowledges the confusion that echoes in both the novel and criticism on it: “I’ve known him before. I always thought he was French” (60). Any thoughtful reading of Hemingway’s fiction, I think, should see how central to it is this motif of confusion, this use of confused and confusing characters. Be they old men in clean, well-lighted places or at bridges; young boys who think that temperatures are calculated only in centigrade or that lustful feelings can be voided by cutting off one’s penis; men unable to deal maturely with “unreasonable” or lesbian women; immigrants perplexed by Prohibition laws; or mentally unstable young soldiers—these characters all testify to a dominant pattern in Hemingway’s works. Not only does it provide the foundation for The Sun Also Rises and A Farewell to Arms, but it also reveals the major “figure in the carpet” of Men without Women and Winner Take Nothing. Indeed, “The Light of the World” is the purest example of the pattern, one that traces back to its origin in young Ernest’s confusion about his confusing father.

Pattern or not, perhaps I have only assigned Jake and Frederic one more mistaken identity. But in my discussion of Farewell I
have tried especially to respond fully to Hemingway's fictive illusion: I take Frederic exclusively at his word. For one thing, I am less confident than some readers of hearing when Frederic's voice leaves off and Hemingway's begins. For another thing, by listening to Frederic's story as it emerged from his consciousness, I think I can now separate Frederic's reasons for telling his story from some speculations I want to advance for Hemingway's writing it. The question I turn to, then, is why Hemingway dealt Frederic and Jake such unpleasant fates.

Assuming that The Sun Also Rises defines an ethic of how to live, I assume further that in his "second" novel, A Farewell to Arms, Hemingway attempts to answer the question that the formulated ethic of his first novel generates: Why must he find a way to live that differs from his predecessors'? His answer, naturally enough, is that he views the world differently than they. For them it was orderly and predictable. For him it is irrational. For them institutions, beliefs, and commitments were emblematic of some cosmic orderliness and offered humans the means to attune themselves to such order. For him they are self-deceptions. Frederic's inability to find meaning in family, country, profession, religion, duty, reason, nature, and love is due to no flaw in him. The flaw is rather in the irrational nature of things.

One thing clear about Farewell is that Hemingway insists upon his thesis, as I earlier indicated. In The Sun Also Rises he seems above caring whether anyone, even Jake Barnes, realizes that Romero's yoking of hedonism and traditionalism answers the question of how to live. But in Farewell Hemingway stoops, albeit slightly. He does not have Frederic tell his story years after its events. That would have required making Frederic sound as though he had age, experience, knowledge, and perspective—as though he were some wise, mature Count Greffi whose pronouncement of the novel's thesis would be in order, whose whining complaints against the universe would not. Nor does Hemingway have Catherine blurt out the thesis while regaining consciousness from one of her hemorrhages. But he does have Catherine die in childbirth rather than as the victim of some bizarre accident. And he has the fetus strangled in its umbilical cord. Both details force his thesis that even nature is irrational, suggesting that there must be especially compelling reasons for writing Farewell. Let me come at them in a roundabout way.

Thesis novels all grind an ax. Artistic or inartistic, they present arguments that emerge from authors' personal needs more than
from some dispassionate wish to communicate an idea. Like fables (stories written to prove a point), they seem to differ from fictions (stories written to convey an experience) and fantasies (stories written to gratify a wish and externalize an anxiety). Thesis novels, then, like fables, seem to express relatively conscious personal needs, in contrast to fictions and fantasies, which seem to express less conscious, if not altogether unconscious, personal needs.

So what personal needs, besides Hemingway's ambition and desire for fame, do *Sun Also Rises* and *Farewell* express? They express the intellectual need to explain to both his own and the preceding generation just why he and others cast off the values handed down by those predecessors, as I noted a few paragraphs back. But I would assign an even stronger personal need. Marcelline Hemingway tells us that the Hemingway children were required to keep account books of how they spent their weekly allowance, books that father Clarence examined weekly.\(^3\) This early habit, which Hemingway's letters and other records prove to have been a compulsive, lifelong trait, suggests that both thesis novels are variants of those account books. *The Sun Also Rises* expresses Hemingway's personal need to account to his parents for his behavioral ideal. It was wrong, he found, to repress his senses and to strap himself to a set of outdated traditions. But it was also wrong for him to abandon himself to sensual anarchy. The bullfight, he saw, integrated vital traditions and heightened sensations. Similarly, *Farewell* would account to his parents that such an ethic was made necessary by his insight and conviction that he dwelt in an irrational universe, an alien concept to them.

But thesis novels, like fables, are also defensive. They argue ideas and advocate views that benefit their moralistic authors. By dramatizing his arguments of an ethical ideal and the world's irrationality, Hemingway, that is, rationalizes his own misconduct.

Compounded as *The Sun Also Rises* is of travelogue, tauro-machy, historically inspired events, thinly veiled acquaintances, and gossip, its complexity conceals many of the personal needs that writing the novel sought to gratify. Yet among the various conscious needs had to be Hemingway's wish to deal with misconduct he felt susceptible to, namely, the allure of the temptress. As Baker suggests, Lady Duff Twysden tantalized Hemingway, before, during, and after the 1925 Pamplona *feria*
that inspired *The Sun Also Rises*. So on the one hand, Hemingway wishes directly to abuse her for sexual profligacy and moral depravity and indirectly to abuse her prototype, Agnes von Kurowsky, who supposedly first lured and betrayed him. But on the other hand, Hemingway cannot deny that he desires her, even though he has marital obligations. He tries to assert his personal fidelity by characterizing the novel’s men as sexually loyal to Lady Brett—as Jake, Count Mippi, Cohn, Campbell, and Romero all are. Yet their collective and admirable loyalty is insufficient to arrest Hemingway’s sexual desires. Had it been, he would have written a less successful novel, for he would have ended the novel unambiguously. That is, he would have ended the novel by clearly betraying Brett, perhaps having her cast off Romero only after she was sexually glutted, perhaps having Jake morally censure her by refusing to respond to her telegram, perhaps having Jake maintain better self-control during the last episode in Madrid, subduing at least his immature sarcasm. Hemingway’s ambiguous ending to the novel vouches for his ambivalent feelings toward Lady Duff Twysden and demonstrates the lure such a type holds for him.

Even more, Hemingway’s adulterous relationship with Pauline Pfeiffer during the time he was revising *The Sun Also Rises* must have reinforced his ambivalence toward Brett and ambiguous treatment of her and Jake. For though Hemingway may have begun the novel with Lady Duff as Brett’s model, by the time he was completing the novel he was in love with a woman who had lured him from his marriage bed, a second model. To vilify the temptress was something he could not do without vilifying the man who succumbs to her. In effect, though Hemingway began *The Sun Also Rises* to deny his susceptibility and repudiate the wish to commit adultery, he completed it to rationalize the actual misconduct.

The conspicuous misconduct that predated the writing of *Farewell* was of course the result of Hemingway’s adultery, betrayal of Hadley. His divorce from her and marriage to Pauline also betrayed his family’s values. It would benefit him to show his family that his conduct was consistent with the irrationalities of the world he inhabits. And by emphasizing as *Farewell* does that it is permissible to desert irrational commitments, Hemingway may have hoped to mollify his guilt for betraying Hadley.

The novel itself clarifies this point. During the retreat from Caporetto Frederic shoots at the two engineering sergeants who de-
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sert him when a vehicle gets stuck. The next day he himself de-
serts the Italian army, leaping into the Tagliamento River to
avoid summary execution. It is usual to regard the first desertion
as opprobrious and the second, though excusable, ironic in the
light of the first. But both acts are morally defensible. In the
bridge episode Frederic is part of a massive evacuation, he is
threatened harm along the road for being an officer, he sees the
example of those summary executions, and he hears the fanati-
cism of the battle police. His leap into the river, then, repudiates
the dangers and irrationalities compressed in the scene before
him. By contrast the engineering sergeants have ridden along
with Frederic’s unit of three vehicles and have had the chance to
get out when the unit leaves the main retreat column. The pair
have even been forewarned that they will have to help if the vehi-
cles get stuck, Frederic telling Bonello, in whose vehicle they are
riding, “They’ll be good to push’ ” (199). Since Frederic’s retreat
route has continually gotten them closer to Udine, nothing indi-
cates that when Aymo’s vehicle gets stuck their situation is hope-
less. So when they desert Frederic’s unit at the first sign of difficul-
ty, Frederic shoots at them, not because he is obeying military
regulations about how an officer must deal with insubordination,
but because they are dishonoring a tacit personal commitment.
Opportunists, the engineering sergeants let us see how their and
Frederic’s acts of desertion differ. Whereas they quickly abandon
him and his men, Frederic stays with his men until either they are
shot (Aymo), they desert him (Bonello), or they get lost in the
crowd at the Tagliamento (Piani). And Frederic turns directly
from this desertion to seek out the pregnant Catherine, faithful to
his commitment to her.

Frederic’s fidelity to her partly expresses and rationalizes Hem-
ingway’s need to believe that he too had been loyal to the Cather-
ine of his actual experience, the Agnes von Kurowsky who al-
legedly jilted him. By portraying her as a marginal neurotic who
imposes a psychological burden upon Frederic, Hemingway ital-
icizes his own personal loyalty. But he even more directly ration-
alizes his conduct to Hadley. By reading Frederic’s story as a
veiled account of Hemingway’s experience, she should under-
stand that he too was part of the irrational fabric of the world he
describes. She should also realize that irrational forces could
erode a commitment to a person as well as to marriage vows, real-
ize that, despite his self-assurance and take-charge manliness
and glamour, he suffered from the feelings of inadequacy that
Frederic's noncommital blandness mirrors. She should further understand that their relationship could never be as deep as the one he wanted to think he and Agnes had. For example, declaring that he and Catherine never wished to be alone while they were with each other, Frederic says—in words perhaps aimed at Hadley's ears—"it has only happened to me once like that" (249). Finally, Hadley should understand that some of Catherine's neurotic tendencies are traced from her own. Not only had Hadley's father committed suicide when she was twelve, but her overprotective and domineering mother repressed her native impulsiveness and forced her to live a life of virtual seclusion for the last six years of Mrs. Richardson's life. Only with her mother's death in 1920 was Hadley able to emancipate herself. Gay and confident though her letters are during her courtship and engagement to Hemingway, their cheerfulness has a desperate note reminiscent of Catherine—the desperation one might expect in 1920 of a twenty-eight-year-old women dreading the prospect of spinsterhood.  

To venture a last step: thesis novels, like fictions and fantasies, ventilate unconscious anxieties and wishes, aggressions and guilts. The biographical circumstances during the composition of *The Sun Also Rises* were, as I have said, too unstable to assess Hemingway's unconscious drives with any certitude. But several tendencies do seem apparent. It is probable that Lady Brett evokes Hemingway's ambivalent Oedipal wishes for, and fears of, his own mother. If so, then Jake's craving for, and disgust with, a woman who bestowed affection indiscriminately suggests why Jake suffers self-contempt: he is fixated upon a woman he desires and detests. Stronger, I think, are Hemingway's aggressions and guilt feelings toward his father, cast as father Clarence is in Robert Cohn's old-fashioned sense of duty, honor, and obligation; and in Montoya's stern devotion to the noble traditions of bullfighting. Jake's rejection of Cohn, endorsed by Brett's own actions, would express Hemingway's hostility toward Cohn's prototype, Dr. Hemingway. But Hemingway could conceal that hostility by putting between himself and his father several mediators, ones whose competition for Lady Brett's charms would defy and deserve retaliation from the fatherlike Cohn. Insofar as Count Mippipopolous's values mock Cohn's asceticism, Bill Gordon's values mock Cohn's lack of genuine fellow feeling, Romero's values mock Cohn's romantic absolutism, and Mike Campbell's values mock Cohn's inability to be carefree—these four men be-
come Hemingway's doubles, screens behind which he conceals both his incestuous wish and his accompanying hostility toward Dr. Hemingway.

As for the castration anxiety that always accompanies the Oedipal pattern, the novel has it too. In an act symbolic of castration, Cohn, the outraged father, beats up Romero, the taboo-violating son, in Brett's, the incestuous mother's, room. But in the same scene Romero vanquishes Cohn, just as he kills those other father surrogates, the bulls. For it is Romero's much-praised refusal to give up that drives Cohn off—an honorable analogue to parricide. More clearly, Hemingway deals with castration anxiety by making Jake sexually impaired. Declaring Jake's inability (and Hemingway's unwillingness) to penetrate the mutually sought-after woman, his impairment also denies the father the satisfaction of properly punishing the son's incestuous wishes, for Jake has already suffered the result of the punishment. The only punishment Hemingway allows Jake is the disapproval of the other outraged woman, Montoya. But Montoya's unsmiling bow as he passes Jake on the stairs and his refusal to bid Jake goodbye are enough. Indeed, Jake's novel-ending depression and guilt feelings register less his grief over his irremediable physical situation and all that it entails than his grief over betraying Montoya, Hemingway's depression for betraying his father.8

Hemingway's feelings about Hadley's deficiencies, Pauline's treachery, Agnes's betrayal, and his mother's tyranny may account for the unconscious aggression in Farewell, resulting as it does in making Catherine die. But I am inclined to see his aggressions and guilt feelings more clearly directed at his father, for Hemingway's ambivalence toward him was heightened by the doctor's suicide during the time Hemingway was revising the novel. The aggressions first: not only was his father the stern moralist who inculcated into his son the antique illusions and beliefs that Hemingway has Frederic Henry reject, but Dr. Hemingway's profession had also nursed his son's illusion of invulnerability: "Well," Frederic thinks, "I knew I would not be killed. Not in this war. It did not have anything to do with me" (37). Hemingway's shelling at Fossalta shattered that illusion. And rejection by the wartime nurse, Agnes, was equally traumatic, as Marcelline remembers.9 Both woulds could account for the hostility the novel directs against the medical profession and, thereby, Hemingway's father. After all, not only does Frederic never mention his actual father, but he also shows no filial regard
for his stepfather. And in the novel Hemingway seems to find pleasure in unleashing his hostility toward those fictive replicas of his father, the ascetic house doctor in Milan and the repressive Miss Van Campen. (Though represented as a women, the dynamics of her relationship with Frederic resemble those of Dr. Hemingway's with his children.) But Hemingway manifests his hostility by having Catherine die in childbirth. Not a victim of narrow hips, she is instead a victim of the novel's unnamed, incompetent obstetrician, the ultimate fictive proxy of Hemingway's own father.

Hemingway's unconscious guilt is also present in the novel. To turn around the previous paragraph's conclusion, I think it is also evident why Hemingway insists on Catherine's death. He has her die so that he can be reconciled with his father. By indulging his incestuous wish in the novel, Hemingway would signal his unconscious that he had also betrayed his father. And to make amends to him Hemingway has Frederic show proper filial respect to another of Dr. Hemingway's stand-ins, wise old Count Greffi. More significantly, he punishes himself by depriving himself of the object who had encouraged his filial betrayal, Catherine. If that is not enough punishment, he also slays those other doubles of himself, Rinaldi and the engineering sergeant. Opportunists both, their self-seeking is incompatible with the filial respect due the father. Hence their disobedience is fittingly rewarded, Rinaldi punished with syphilis, the engineering sergeant shot down for desertion. The only double Hemingway lets survive intact is the priest, the chastened son whose passivity and obedience exemplify the behavior acceptable to a wronged father.

An abridgment of the plot of *A Farewell to Arms* would see a story of a young man's successive losses, ones that finally leave him entirely alone in a foreign country. One translation of that story would see it reflecting an Oedipal anxiety in which a vindictive father metes out a just punishment both to the women who has betrayed him—Catherine claimed that a bomb had blown him to bits—and to the son who has sought to replace him. A more basic translation of the story would see it reflecting the primary anxiety of separation. Frederic's story would be expressing Hemingway's deepest fear of being abandoned, of losing parental affection and attention, of being punished for defects he is incapable of correcting, of being deprived of his need for affiliation. Frederic and Catherine's love corroborates this anxiety since their relationship is its antithesis. They wish to retreat into mutual absorp-
tion, to be alone together, outside and above reality. That primary wish, of course, is the infantile dream of returning to a place of security and pleasure and gratification. Whether that place should be fetal or infantile—the womb or the bed of one’s nursing mother—is immaterial. Hemingway evokes both images in the expanding girth of Catherine, in the beds in which the larger portion of Catherine and Frederic’s relating occurs, and in that equally delusory sanctuary with its blanketing snow, Switzerland.