

## Violence Versus Individualism in Hemingway's a Farewell to Arms

العنف مقابل الفردية في رواية وداعا للسلح

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**Abstract:** *Tracing the development of the individual in relation to human society and the larger cosmos will be the main task of this study. A certain complex of attitudes found in the soldiers of modern American war fiction is first discovered in Frederic Henry of Hemingway's A Farewell to Arms. Henry reveals attitudes which may be seen in the heroes of Crane, Mailer, Jones and Burns. In all the heroes, disillusionment, confusion and preoccupation with self-preservation manifest themselves in varying degrees of intensity depending upon the author's philosophy and his experience with the material. Hemingway's Frederic Henry exhibits an attitude of nihilism brought about by the aimless society in which he lived as an individual and by the wanton death and violence he sees on the Italian front. He deserts but finds that life is still the aggressor waiting to kill him.*

**ملخص:** يركز هذا البحث على دراسة تطور الفرد و علاقته بالمجتمع الانساني والكون. ان بعض المواقف المعقدة الموجودة في شخصية الجنود في رواية الحرب الأمريكية الحديثة قد تم التعرف عليها في شخصية فريدريك هنري – بطل رواية وداعا للسلح. يكشف فريدريك هنري بعض المواقف الموجودة في الشخصيات الموجودة في أعمال كرين، ميلر، جونز و بيرنز.

يتجلى التحرر من الوهم و الفوضى و الحفاظ على الذات، مع كل الأبطال بدرجات متفاوتة معتمدا على تعامل فلسفة و خبرة الكاتب مع الموضوع. لقد أبدى فريدريك هنري موقفا عدما بسبب مجتمعه الذي حاول أن يعيش به كفرد وبسبب الموت و العنف اللذان

قابلهما على الجبهة الايطالية. يتخلى فريدريك هنري عن العنف لكنه يجد أن الحياة ما زالت عدوانية تنتظر القضاء عليه. لذلك يركز هذا البحث على دراسة تطور الفرد و علاقته بالمجتمع الانساني والكون.

### **Introduction:**

Ernest Miller Hemingway was born in 1899. His father was a doctor and he was the second of six children. He spent his childhood vacations in Michigan on hunting and fishing trips. He volunteered for an ambulance unit in France during the World War I, but was wounded and hospitalized for six months. After the war, as a war correspondent based in Paris, he met expatriate American writers Sherwood Anderson, Ezra Pound, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and Gertrude Stein. Stein in particular has influenced his style.

Hemingway is arguably the most popular American novelist of this century. He produced “the most important American Literature of the twentieth century.” (Richard Fantina, 2005, p.7). His sympathies are basically a political and humanistic, and in this sense he is universal. His simple style makes his novels easy to comprehend, often set in exotic surroundings. As a believer in the cult of experience, Hemingway often involved his characters in violent situations in order to reveal their inner natures; in his later works, violence sometimes becomes an occasion for masculine assertion.

Violence is the chief feature of Hemingway’s writing and his novels are embroidered by an outstanding tragic quality. His themes are violent and his characters tend to deal with war, love, death, decadent institutions, and fraud. His work is often distinguished by ruthlessness, and the world of his method is tragic. Raymond S. Nelson observes, “War scenes head the list with war’s consequent human suffering, then rapacity, cruelty, and despair.” (Raymond S. Nelson, 1979, p.4). Hemingway could be defined as the “heroic artist” whose ability is best disclosed in the depiction of war, violence and death.

Hemingway was born in a troubled moment in history. His time was somehow more painful than all earlier times. It was torn by wars and civic and domestic violence. One of the features of his time was

the way in which civic peace was destroyed from within. The force of urbanization was overwhelming. The refined classes evaporated, only isolated individuals survived.

Many critics have described Hemingway as a writer who believed in the “code” of masculinity - a code of courage and honour. Ivan Kashkeen speaks of Hemingway’s “skeptical individualism.” (Heinrich Straumann, *American Literature in the Twentieth Century*, p. 129). Linda Wagner-Martin appreciates the generational shifts in Hemingway scholarship. Wagner-Martin pays tribute to Ray B. West, Earl Rovit, Carlos Baker, Philip Young, Charles Fenton, Sheridan Baker, Arthur Waldhorn, and others. We can see how their work fed into Michael Reynold’s *First War: The Making of A Farewell to Arms*. Published in 1976 Reynold’s work has, until now, stood as the most complete investigation of Hemingway’s *A Farewell to Arms*. In fact, all stressed Hemingway’s concern with courage and death.

In Hemingway’s writings, misery is widespread with all victors agonize at the hands of the Great Illusion. All negated by war, violence and death. The common pattern of approach to the Hemingway hero can be summarized thus: (1) the hero’s awareness of life is limited to his early experiences of war and violence; (2) there is a “code” of values, secular or religious, embodied in a minor figure called the “code hero”, which the hero wants to achieve; (3) while the hero in Hemingway’s early works lacks this “code” and often becomes either passive and beaten or nihilistic, in the later works he has attained the values of that “code” and either active and undefeated or humanistic and socially committed .

In fact, the world which Hemingway has described is limited by violence and death and man’s alienation from the world. His typical protagonist lives in sempiternal revolt against his own finitude. He lives in constant revolt against his situation in a violent and disorganized world.

Hemingway’s world is ultimately a world at war – war either in the literal sense of armed and violent situation, or figuratively as marked everywhere with violence and a general hostility. The individual in this world operates under such conditions – desperation, fear and apprehension. In facing the violent situation, Hemingway

demonstrates the separate identity of the individual. In mass warfare, the individual is only a puny part of the great whole. What traditional philosophy had given, under the show of the infinite, was the consolation of death. Limited grimly by the urgencies of war, man must not lose his individuality at any cost. In the midst of violence and brutality and impending death, man should dare to be an individual and not just part of the crowd. In a violent world, man is free to be or not to be. Violence, then, becomes a quality of the way of life which the individual chooses.

Hemingway's world in which this story of pathetic longing and stoic toleration is played out, is clearly a violent and meaningless world. This world of dark vision was already existing when Hemingway wrote his novels. He only understood how to face a world, boiling with violence. The world he encountered was the "God abandoned" world of Hardy and Housman, it was the world of Conrad, Faulkner, and Dreiser. This was a world of unprincipled civilization, victimized individuals, and universal meaninglessness and aimlessness from modern life.

Maxwell Geismar says, "In a sense Hemingway's milieu is war, he was fortunate to have lived in an epoch whose stages of destruction correspond so closely to his inner needs. In a variety of later stories and novels he made the theme his own and became the chronicler of a civilization that was tearing itself apart." (Maxwell Geismar p.55).

Edmund Wilson, in his writing in 1939, was able to see the timeliness of Hemingway's work, "Going back over Hemingway's books today, we can see clearly what an error of the politics it was to accuse him of an indifference to society. His whole work is a criticism of society, he has responded to every pressure of the moral atmosphere of the time, as it is felt at the roots of human relations, with a sensitivity almost unrivaled." Wilson called him a "gauge of morale" (Wilson, 1950, p.255).

It cannot be denied that Hemingway's central involvement was with the devastating principles of human nature, with violence, distress and suffering. It is only in modern times that we have come to a more systematized understanding of these forces. In his novels, Hemingway offers us – in an incomparable burst of violent emotion -

human guilt, the series of little deaths we cause or are stricken by. We suffer by chance and by design before the final death. The human emotions which Hemingway centers around his search for violence have their logic as well as their phenomena; but, at times, Hemingway fails to give us their full nature. Thus, Hemingway's central idea reaches us only in scattered parts. Granted, death instincts are at the center of Hemingway's fiction, and are not always broken or causeless. Though we seek to demolish perhaps more often than we should like to believe, we do not seek to destroy without reason. If Hemingway's element of destruction and violence lives in all of us also, making us like animals, both hunters and the hunted, unlike animals we have an awareness of the forces which drive us toward our consuming acts. In fact, Hemingway's destructive impulses are causeless and unchanging. His writing about violence is not only reportorial. Much of it springs from his personal inner violence, from his temperament so tortured and so inhibited and ruled over by a sort of iron discipline. With other writers the process of writing is a catharsis.

There is something simultaneously interesting and abhorrent in Hemingway's understanding of violence. In the words of Heinrich Straumann, "The notion an absolute, even if it is death it self, will always exercise its spell particularly if it is associated with its counter point of creative dynamics, of which violence in its turn may be considered the negative or destructive phase." (Heinrich Straumann, 1962 p.129).

It is this inbred mortality that Hemingway explores in *A Farewell to Arms* more deeply than he had either in *The Sun Also Rises* or the *Nick Adams Stories*. *A Farewell to Arms* is definitely Hemingway's darkest work, where man seems the victim of a hostile world. Hemingway was inspired to write this novel out of two sets of circumstances: the violent events associated with his war experiences in Italy in 1918 and certain attitudes and feelings connected with it the period of novelistic composition in 1928-29. These were the worst times for Hemingway, full of sorrow and disorder. Commenting on the the novel, Oldsey says that it names that, "The strategy of this work is nevertheless somewhat like that of Peele's work: this young knight of "rueful countenance" will become a "wordsman," one who

narrates the praises of his mistress in sometimes lyrical style, and enumerates with bitter irony the lessons of life that emanate from wounds and other causes.” (Bernard Oldsey,1979,p.34) Hemingway, who was wounded in combat, proved that the ruined romantic hero who in a violent world he never made artistically wished things could go better than violent facts allowed. Here then is the center of Hemingway’s idea of violence: in the icy burning impact of a bullet, in the blinding flash of a skill, in the sudden contact of a bull’s horn, in the dangerous vicinity of a wounded lion, violence isolates the individual from the formless lump of humanity. In the vague twilight between life and imminent death time and place become irrelevant questions. It is the momentous moment of violent conflict. Nothing has significance beyond the moment of violent conflict except existence and survival. “The superfluities of culture, race, tradition, even religion, all disappear, in the face of one overpowering fact - the necessity to survive on an individual basis. This is the separate peace of the only peace which could be in violent times” (Surrendra Singh Chandel, 1991, p. 6).

Hemingway’s art is the record of his gradually improvised techniques of defense and survival. Even the self- inflicted death of Ernest Hemingway may be viewed as a stance against the universe. Hemingway was obsessed early with the idea of a desperate means of survival. From 1918 until the end of his life, he concentrated on playing the game of survival with all the means at disposal. He refused to be trapped in one place. His record of unsuccessful marriages and his violently crushed friendships project a picture of a man hypersensitivity ready to strike out against an enemy before he himself is struck. Hemingway adopted a highly hostile attitude against existence: “Never lead against a hitter unless you can out hit him. Crowd a boxer, and take every thing he has to get inside. Duck a swing. Block a hook. And counter a job with every thing you own Papa’s delivery of hard – learned facts of life”. (Lillian Ross,1961, p. 56).

In fact, violence achieves a fundamental role in the thought of Hemingway, is to reduce the problem of survival to its simplest terms, where it can best be handled by the individual. Thus, in Hemingway’s philosophy of action, violence becomes a test of integrity. Integrity is

sincerity, it is the purity of life. The idea of survival highlights this purity as it does in the sudden expositions of Frederic Henry and Nick Adams. All Hemingway heroes face violent situations and crisis decision. His protagonists must develop into something larger and finer or lose their souls. The foremost crisis in a violent world is death; and the threat of impending death forces the hero to concentrate on giving meaning to life through action. Man meets nothingness in the moment of violence, but man also finds freedom when facing the possibility of death. Thus, in Hemingway's vision of violence and death, the individual's dignity becomes all important.

The setting of *A Farewell to Arms* is a world war which becomes progressively absurd as its leaders lose touch with the dominating structure in a mass retreat. The reader observes the war and the love story as it is filtered through the mind of Frederic Henry. It was not the first book to show the condition of men who, because of war, had been unable to come to terms with life. The novel was acclaimed as a great love story rendered tragic by a world war and a hostile supernatural power. The novel begins with the usual portrayal of soldiers getting drunk and fantasizing about pretty nurses while simultaneously lamenting the ugly atmosphere of war. Aimeel L. Pozorski observes, "The novel continues to narrate the horror of war and the bonds of love among soldiers and between couples, bonds with with the power to sustain characters through ambushes and defection, rain storms, and injury." (Aimeel L. Pozorski, 2004, p.75). To those who had grown up in the war, or lived in its shadow, the novel cut back to the beginning of the process, to the lost moment of innocence of motive and purity of emotion. It served, in a way, "as the great romantic alibi for a generation." (Robert Pen Warren, 1974, p.76).

The story of *A Farewell to Arms*, which has its setting on the northern Italian front during World War I, is told by an American volunteer ambulance driver, Frederic Henry. Hemingway gives little of Henry's personal background even by indirection. The reader tends to assume that he is supposed to be a midwesterner partly because of association of Henry with Hemingway himself, and partly because the number of allusions to Chicago and the stockyards exceeds those to other places in America. When Catherine asks him about his family

and whether he cares about them he says, "I did, but we quarrelled so much it wore itself out" (*A Farewell to Arms*, p13 change) Despite the estrangement, his grandfather still writes and sends him money on occasion, although Henry has no strong attachment to any place or any particular person. He is quite obviously an educated person: Hemingway's crisp dialogue and thought sequences reveal a young man who has had the cultural advantage of the middle class. He also speaks Italian, and Count Greffi, a cultural Italian nobleman finds him a suitable companion over dinner and the billiard table. Henry's original reason for being in was study. When the war broke out, he had been in Rome desultorily studying agriculture, in a pursuit which places him considerably higher in socio-economic status than other soldiers and officers.

Frederic Henry's war is the brutal, close combat trench warfare of World War I. Hemingway contrasts the comfortable quarters and recreational facilities of the officer corps with the mud, blood, and death of the line soldiers. From his vantage point as a non-combatant officer, Henry can view the war objectively; he feels sympathy for his less fortunate comrades-in-arms who must live in dirt and cold for a cause neither they nor Henry fully understands or accepts. There is actually no cause, no honor, no duty to impose itself upon his conscience.

A non-combat, he lives in comfortable houses, eats and drinks well, makes frequent visits to a brothel maintained exclusively for officers, and has extensive leaves urged on him by a sympathetic commanding officer. Despite such pleasures he is malcontent; and the more this fact emerges the more it becomes evident that his mood is a reflection not of his personal fortune, but of the whole dismal panorama of civilization disjointed by war. (E.M.Halliday, 1956, P.65)

The circumstances of Henry's position are such that he can leave the war behind when on one of his frequent leaves. To the expatriate Henry, solace in the forms of eating, drinking, and sleeping with women is never far away. While he is morally bound by his commission, leaving the war and the Italian army present no really serious physical problems for him. There are still places in the world where he can find sanctuary.

Hemingway's characters are usually violent . They are strong men, experienced in the hard worlds they inhabit, and not clearly given to emotional display or sensitive shrinking. Robert Penn Warren explains, "They represent some notion of a code, some notion of honor, that makes a man a man, and that distinguishes him from people who merely follow their random impulses and who are, by consequence, messy." (Robert Penn Warren p. 79.). In *A Farewell to Arms* , The attitudes of Henry reveal themselves throughout the story in his conversation, in his unspoken thoughts, and in his relationships with the people – soldier, peasants, officials, doctors – whom he meets. He bears the shock of the exploding Austrian mortar shell that broke his knee, the blood dripping on him from the hemorrhaging soldier in the ambulance. In the hospital he manages to keep from being destroyed by inept surgeons until a good one comes along who rescues his leg. His split- second reaction rescues him from the threat of the execution in the darkness and rain engulfing the retreating troops. Henry seems to be caught up in the perversity of man trying to destroy himself.

What Hemingway introduces in the opening chapter is "a macroscopic metaphor that arches the whole novel." (Arthur Waldhorn,1972, p.118) There is death in nature: "There was fighting for the mountain too, but it was not successful, and in the fall when the rains came the leaves all fell from the chestnut trees and the branches were bare and the trunks black with rain. The vineyards were thin and bare branched too and all the country wet and brown and dead with the autumn." (P. 7). Thus, the opening chapter of the novel determines the spirit for the book. Yokelson observes:

The incomparable opening chapter, with its autumnal tone, its slightly archaic rhythms, its omens of death, and its concluding dark irony, seems like the work of an ancient poet brooding over the pathetic human animal and its place in the cosmos. (Joseph Yokelson,1960, p. 86).

Yokelson is right, for in the novel Hemingway shows the tragic fact that man can scarcely control his circumstances. Therefore, what Hemingway does in "his first study of doom" (Carlos Baker,1972, p.

96) is to demonstrate the misfortune inherent in failing to employ any command over one's fate.

Carlos Baker, in *Hemingway :The Writer as Artist* (1972), has established himself as the leading critic of Hemingway's symbolism. Baker's chapter on *A Farewell to Arms* illustrates his attitude. He discovers that the essential meaning of this novel is revealed by two major symbols. These two symbols are introduced in the opening chapter. As Baker observes the plain as a leading symbol. Throughout the novel it is opposed to the mountain image. Baker makes further identification of themes and imagery,

The Home-concept ... is associated with mountains, with dry cold weather; with peace and quiet; with love, dignity, health, happiness, and the good life; and with worship. Or at least the consciousness of God. The Not – home concept is associated with low- lying plains; with rain and fog; with obscenity, indignity, disease, suffering nervousness, war and death, and irreligious. (Carlos Baker,1972, p. 102).

E. M. Halliday describes Baker's explanation as an attempt to drive all of the novel into a symbolic structure. (E. M. Halliday,1956, p.11). He observes, "What I am questioning is the over-all symbolic organization of the novel's structure in terms of the Mountain and the Plain, which Mr. Baker argues as a prime illustration of his unequivocal judgment of Hemingway as a symbolist artist."( Arthur Waldhorn,1972, p.p.44-45.) In *A Farewell to Arms*, the mountains also represent frustrating and insurmountable obstacles to ever winning the war. In an argument with Frederic Henry, the ambulance driver Passini has this to say about the mountains, "War is not won by victory.... Did you see all the far mountains today? Do you think we could take all of them too? Only if the Austrians stop fighting. One side must stop fighting". (p. 41).

Later Henry adopts Passini's feelings, "I did not believe in a war in mountains.... But when something really started every one had to get down of the mountains".(Ibid,p.123). Certainly, the mountains here symbolize the domain of violence through which the individual must pass.

The opening chapter establishes a mood of doom by its somber tone and the epitomic symbols of dust and falling leaves. "If nature can be, at times, beautiful and charming, and seem to represent a promise of meaning for the universe, it can also be blindly destructive or blankly meaningless." (Cleanth Brooks,1973 pp. 22-56). Fall is both a time of birth (the crops are harvested) and death (the foliage dies).

Man-made death, in the pattern of the war, is interspersed with natural death. The mother (earth) impregnated in the spring, brings her seed to full term in the fall. Consistently war will also provide emergence, even if it be the emergence of violence and disaster. This is displayed in a significant image:

The troops were muddy and wet in their capes, their rifles were wed under their capes, the two leather cartridge-boxes on the front of the belts, gray leather boxes heavy with the packs of clips of thin, long 6.5 mm cartridges, bulged forward under the capes so that the men, passing on the road, marched as though they were six months gone with child. (*A Farewell to Arms*, pp.7-8).

The troops are pregnant with violence that might blow up any time, and the cartridges are the seeds of that violence. Later, Catherine is also pregnant because Frederic Henry has permitted his violent physical urge to get the better of him. The winter rains are indicated as "permanent." (Ibid, p.7) and charged with disease. In a tone of satire, Frederic Henry says that the rain brought the cholera but it was checked and "Only seven thousand died of it in the army." (Ibid, p. 8).

*A Farewell to Arms* contains almost all stages of war, from ammunition and military strategy to the psychology of the individual soldiers. The novel could nearly "serve as a manual on trench warfare." (Leo Gurko,1971, p.100). But, that is beside the point that makes the significance of men at war so forceful is its sensory immediacy. Here is the Austrian mortar shell reaching Henry as he sits in a dugout eating the end of his piece of cheese and taking a swallow of wine:

I went out swiftly, all of my self, and I knew I was dead and that it had all been a mistake to think you

just died. Then I floated, and instead of going on I felt myself slide back. I breathed and I was a splintered beam of wood. In the jolt of my head I heard somebody crying. I thought somebody was screaming. I tried to move but I could not move. I heard the machine- guns and rifles firing across the river and all along the river. (A Farewell to Arms, p.44).

This incident deals completely with violence. It gives us clear facts of what occurred at the war front. The entire portrayal is realistic, and the outcome is developed gradually by means of meager details which another author might ignore. The time is one of terror, yet the depiction is scientifically separate. Here is the touch of Frederic wiping his bloody hand on his shirt after discovering his knee is not there: "I knew that I was hit and leaned over and put my hand on my knee. My knee wasn't there." (Ibid, p. 45).

The separation is abruptly broken by his pitiful cry for escape. On one hand, the observing eye operates by itself as an independent recording procedure. On the other hand, the suffering self, mixed with its own personal agony, is forged by Hemingway as the tool that allows him to be simultaneously inside and outside an action as it unravels. During his first meeting with Catherine after his wound, while he is still in the hospital, the physical expression of love becomes an urgent desire for Henry. Catherine acquiesces to his desire and the resultant effect on Henry expresses itself in his thoughts. "God knows I had not wanted to fall in love with her. I had not wanted to fall in love with any one. But God knows I had and I lay on the bed in the room of a hospital and all sort of things went through my head." (Ibid, p.70). Frederic even reaches the stage where marriage --- to make an "honest woman of Catherine" -- enters his head.

Now possessed of a purpose for living, Frederic returns to the front to join the disastrous retreat from Caparetto. While he retains a semblance of his former detachment, the retreat brings out some strains in Henry's character. He sees the war truly from the front -- line soldier's point of view . He sees the heroism and the futility, the frantic drive for survival of those around him. He also sees resignation in the deserters and in the legitimately displaced soldiers who are summarily tried and executed by the " battle police." He himself

had shot a sergeant who had refused to help disengage an ambulance mired down during the retreat. Thus far Frederic Henry remains in the war, still disinterested, intent on his survival, sharing the movement of the Italian soldiers, many of whom have tactily admitted defeat. It is not until Aymo, one of his Italian drivers, is killed by Italian carabinieri that he begins to see little difference in who is shooting. Theodore W. Fuhs observes:

All men now, regardless of uniform, have become potential enemies; and he realizes that he is not invulnerable, that this war could very well end his life and take him from Catherine. Whether the instrument of death is Italian or German is of little import. He, the individual Frederic Henry, must live. (Fuhs, 1965, p.13).

Henry's capture, battle police and obviously imminent execution as a deserter or German spy is the trigger for his actual desertion. Having seen and been a part of the real war, been wounded, been made aware of the waste and futility, he views his captors with the disdain of the battle—baptized. “The questioners had that beautiful detachment and devotion to stern justice of men dealing in death without being in any danger of it.” (A Farewell to Arms p.9)

Lieutenant Henry loses all sense of personal dedication to his fellow—soldiers, abandons his feelings of responsibility to the army, and breaks out of the trap the war has laid for him. From then on he links his fate with only a few persons – nurses, doctors, and bartenders—and they serve his emotional needs and protect him from danger. (Hoffman, 1955,p.71).

If he is to live, he must leave the danger area, not because he is a coward but because he has a reason for living which transcends the war and its causes and overshadows duty and honor. But the reason, Catherine, moves him more rationally than emotionally.

No matter what happens to him – war, love, death—his reaction remains unruffled and uninflicted. It is not that he is a robot incapable of feeling but that he keeps his feelings well in hand and never allows them to extract from him any unnecessary groaning or wailing. It is all

that he can do to keep alive without the futile luxury of self-pity.(Leo Gurko *The Achievement of Ernest Hemingway* 1952 p.371).

Having said farewell to the war, Henry synthesizes his thought with the comment: "I was not made to think . I was made to eat. My God, yes. Eat and drink and sleep with Catherine."(*A Farewell to Arms* p.168)

Henry's escape to Switzerland with Catherine is the final episode in his disillusionment with life and society, and Catherine's death is the ultimate loss with which he must cope. Momentarily, however, he thinks he has beaten the world in the game of life. Dressed as a civilian while going to meet Catherine, Henry expresses his attitude toward war in these lines:

The war was along along away. May be there wasn't any war. There was no war here. Then I realized it was over for me. But I did not have the feeling that it was really over. I had the feeling of a boy who thinks of what is happening at a certain hour at the schoolhouse from which he has played truant.(*Ibid*, p.175).

Henry's "separate peace" (*Ibid*,p.173). meant withdrawal from the intrusions of the war, the regimentation of armies, the demands upon his person of honor and duty toward nations and causes. His only honor and duty were directed toward himself and his survival. Both man and animal possess this instinct of self—preservation. The stronger the instinct is in the man, the harder he struggles to survive. Henry felt this powerful instinct and reacted to it by running. Catherine also had the the instinct, but she had nowhere to run. She died. About her death Henry thinks:

That was what you did. You died. You did not know what it was about. You never had time to learn. They threw you in and told you the rules and the first time they caught you off base they kill you. Or they killed you gratuitously like Aymo. Or gave you syphilis like Rinaldi. But they killed you in the end. You could count on that. Stay around and they would kill you. (*Ibid*, p.232).

Catherine and the dreamlike atmosphere of Switzerland were killed, and Henry must this time survive the emotional assault of personal loss. His attitude, as described by Philip Young, is characteristic of all Hemingway heroes:

The manhood he had attained was thus complicated and insecure, but he was learning a code with which he might maneuver, though crippled, and he was practicing the rites which might exorcise the terrors born of the events that crippled him. In the course of his wounding the world had broken along with the other things his relation to society and its ways. He has served time for it and democracy and the rest quite young, as Hemingway once remarked of himself, declining any further enlistment. (Young, 1966 p.p.79-80)

Although *A Farewell to Arms* is written in the first person, Hemingway's objectivity in presenting his story is maintained. Hemingway identified "...himself wholly with the lives he wrote about, not so much entering into them as allowing them to take possession of him, and accepting-- along with their sensibilities and perception the limitations of their point of view and the limits of their range of expression." (Levin, 1962, p.76). Henry's point of view is limited to the immediate physical needs of the moment. He is not introspective; he is unintellectual and unemotional. His comments limit themselves to descriptions like "good," "bad," "fine." The consistent understatement, as previously noted, sustains verbally Henry's attitude toward the life and society in which he finds himself: he has no illusions. Even the war, confused and chaotic, does not evoke any strong emotional response on Henry's part. Henry does not reflect on injustice or inequality. His only comments concern life's vindictiveness regarding man "...the world has to kill them, so of course it kills them." (p.258) Thus, in his own unreasoning way, Henry accounts for man's trouble and accepts his position. Man hasn't been able to adjust to his own society or the life he has been thrust into. "They" always win in the end. Finally, as Philip Young says:

Henry stands for many men; he stands for the experience of his country; in his evolution from complicity in the war to bitterness to escape, the whole of America could read its recent history in a crucial period, Wilson to

Harding. When he expressed his disillusionment with the ideals the war claimed to promote, and jumped in a river and deserted, Henry's action epitomized the contemporary feeling of a whole nation. ( Young, 1959 p. 13)

In fact, Henry's stoical attitude has been shaped by different circumstances. His position is non-combatant. Although he is at times in danger from enemy artillery, the duration of the danger period is usually short, only the time required to evacuate the wounded. Even after his wound he can return to his unit without undue trepidation. It is not until the disastrous retreat from Caporetto that he becomes really aware of the possibility, even probability, of his own death. The summary execution of the officers by the battle police and the death of Aymo from the fire of Italian troops bring home the irrationality of the war and the situation in which he, a non-combatant volunteer ambulance driver, finds himself. After his separate peace, Catherine's unreasonable death nearly strengthens his ideas that "society and its standards are worthless." (Snell, 1947, p.164). But society and the world are parts of life and ultimately his indictment includes life itself. The paradox of life eventually being the cause of death makes living the most important thing. To Henry, his own life becomes all-important; and morality and conformity are simply meaningless words in the face of violent and chaotic destiny. Man tries to delude himself into thinking that values exist, but life makes a mockery of these futile efforts. It is on the complication of these feelings and in order to escape a particular death which he has not deserved, Henry finally admits :

I did not say anything I was always embarrassed by the words sacred, glorious, and sacrifice and the expression in vain. ... Abstract words such as glory, honour, courage or hollow were obscene beside the concrete names of villages, the numbers of roads, the names of rivers, the number of regiments and the dates. (A Farewell to Arms, p.133) .

In view of his commitment to realistic dialogue, Hemingway clearly would have liked to record the characteristic response of soldiers to such "indecent pities" (Leo Marx, 1988, p.279). It is important to note that Frederic Henry shows his distrust in "the

sacred, glorious, and sacrifice,” only as words of propaganda, later used by the Italian carabinieri to prosecute their own officers, and not in the values of “Liberty, Equality and Fraternity” as such. He believes in these values, but he resents their misuse by the politicians. The essential thing to note in the words of Frederic is that his words imply the ideals that had drawn him to participate in war as well as his subsequent disenchantment with his original hope. His disillusionment however, is not with values of human liberty - he never loses faith in the positive values of human liberty, equality, and fraternity - but with the system that has the responsibility of promulgating those values. These better values, when placed at the mercy of a rigid system, become as tyrannical as those against which they were upheld; what the system regards is not the individual human being but its own pattern of rigidity. It is this disregard for the individual that makes the Hemingway hero retreat from planned societies. Hence the disillusion that Frederic meets and his subsequent belief that “I had seen nothing sacred, and the things that were glorious had no glory and the sacrifices were like the stockyards at Chicago if nothing was done with the meat except to bury it.” (p. 133).

Frederic’s ambition here to become the savior of mankind carries with it a certain naivete; for instead of understanding the real issues involved in the particular war, he only feels that humanity is somehow on fire and he could rescue it through his heroism. This is obviously the romantic ambition of a youth. There is, of course, a certain amount of idealism in Frederic’s fighting for humanity. Every time he fights for the better interest of human society, he meets with disillusionment. But as his idealism becomes less and less illusory, his disillusionment becomes less severe; for every such experience brings him better understanding of human nature and more tolerance of its limitations.

Frederic’s greater and more complex awareness of the war in which he is participating is indicated by his elaborate and intricate contemplations that occupy a substantial portion of the novel. Some critics, however, view the hero’s ruminations as a sign of his lack of belief in the cause he is fighting for. Here is a representative statement by John Aldridge, who observes that Hemingway and the “lost generation” learned to “hold tight to themselves and to the concrete simplicities. ... When the world around them seemed to be breaking to

pieces” ( Aldridge,1951, pp.10-11). Aldridge’s observation here sounds remarkably similar to T. S. Eliot’s objection to Shakespeare’s Hamlet – that the play is an “artistic failure” because Hamlet (and hence Shakespeare) is unsure of his aims. Aldridge’s judgement, like Eliot’s, is wrong because it mistakes complex awareness for confusion. Whenever Frederic expresses his doubts it is always about the politicians, and never about his faith in the principles he is fighting for.

There are many tragic strokes in *A Farewell to Arms* identifying the atrocities of war with all that is brutal and meaningless in human life, that gives the novel its predominantly tragic texture. The catastrophe, Catherine Barkley’s shocking death, has the ambivalent effect of partly concealing this identification while at the same time violently reinforcing the total effect of irony. Society and the war could not be held responsible for Catherine’s death, but the fact is that she did die. And no man-made platitudes could provide a rational reason. To Henry only the “now” has reality, and the moment must be in relation to himself. All Henry can do, he discovers, is to live well and die well guided only by the light of his personal integrity. He is the disillusioned soldier, not because he has suffered inordinately himself, but because he has observed life in war and the needless death in it and surrounding it. To Henry war is only a part of life – an extension bringing death more suddenly and violently – but still symbolic of the chaos and irrationality of all living. Life, however, is still important to Henry regardless of what man has done to it or what nature has prescribed as its end. As Ray B. West, Jr., says:

Given Hemingway’s suspicion of ultimate doom and his ultimate fondness for being alive, it is no surprise that his philosophical preoccupation is primarily ethical. Extinction may well be the end of all, as the writer of Ecclesiastes repeatedly remarked, but for Hemingway and his heroes this merely emphasizes the need to live each moment properly and skilfully, to sense judiciously the texture of every fleeting act and perception. (West ,1962,p.375.)

Frederic Henry shares, the American ideal of personal independence. For Henry “...Hemingway invokes in his own idiom that most profound and characteristically American ideal, the survival

of the individual through the fullest realization of his own powers in free association with comrades who react as he does.”(Gurko,p.375). Henry the individual falls in love against his better judgement. As he says, “I had not wanted to fall in love with anyone.” (A Farewell to Arms p.70) Henry is notable for his usual avoidance of rationalization. He accepts his position grudgingly, but stoically, and expresses his individuality in life and in war in the small ways open to him. The tremendous scope of the military organization, and the confusion of the battles force Henry to lose some of his identity. But his rebellion, small as it is in the light of these circumstances, is still individual outcries against the forces that direct his destiny, “In post- individual era, the rebel-victim is perhaps one of the last examples of a vanishing conception of man. A grotesque effigy to the rule of chaos, this half – demonic and half – quixotic creature still placates darkness with the light of human pride, agony, or dimension.”(Hassan,1963, pp.30-1). Frederic Henry doesn’t want to accept life as it is; he wants it as he thinks it should be. His farewell to arms is the ultimate, without irony, without emotion. If war means death, man must say farewell to war at any expense, whether it be honor, duty, integrity. Ray B. West, Jr., says of A Farewell to Arms: “What the novel says, finally, is that you cannot escape the obligation of action – you cannot say ‘farewell to arms’ ; you cannot sign a separate peace. You can only learn to live with life, to tolerate it as ‘the initiated’ learn to tolerate it.’ (West,1962. p.151) For Henry there is no dull resignation. The American soldier in modern war fiction has come full circle. Henry takes Hemingway’s words literally; only places have dignity; man can do without dignity if survival is the alternative.

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