"GRACE UNDER PRESSURE" AND HEMINGWAY'S BROAD WAR AND ANTI-WAR PICTURE IN A FAREWELL TO ARMS

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Abstract: Ernest Hemingway, appreciated for his very distinctive writing style, was characterized by economy and understatement, in opposition to other modernist writers, who dwelt more on the stream, or even the ocean of consciousness. He was the author with a significant influence on the development of twentieth century fiction writing, his protagonists being typically people dealing with critical action, rather than with words, literary characters usually seen as projections of his own character – men who must show "grace under pressure,"[1] and the pressure is often associated with war and death. Both these characters and Hemingway himself seem to undergo a very puzzling dilemma in their approach to existential issues that they find particularly important: will they bathe in the glamour of manly action, associated with war?
The hereby paper deals with the comprehensive war picture sketched by Hemingway as the significant background against which the code hero shows courage and defiance as, famously put by the author 'grace under pressure.'

Keywords: war, love story, code hero, hope, death.

During World War I, Hemingway left his reporting job after only a few months, and, against his father's wishes, tried to join the United States Army. He failed the medical examination due to poor eye-sight, and instead joined the Red Cross Ambulance Corps. That was not a very manly beginning for warlike Hemingway, as Red Cross service was considered effeminate. In this respect, Theodore Roosevelt is quoted as saying:

> Red Cross work, YMCA work, driving ambulances, and the like, excellent though it all is, should be left to men not of military age or unfit for military service, and to women; young men of vigorous bodies and sound hearts should be left free to do their proper work in the fighting line. (Vernon 37)

While moving to the Italian front, Hemingway stopped in Paris, which was under constant bombardment from German artillery. He claims to have tried to get as close to combat as possible. Soon after arriving on the Italian Front, he witnessed the brutalities of war; on his first day of duty, an ammunition factory near Milan blew up. Hemingway had to pick up the human remains, mostly women who worked there. This first, extremely cruel encounter with death strongly impressed him.

At the Italian front in July 1918, Hemingway was wounded delivering supplies to soldiers, which ended his career as an ambulance driver. Hemingway was hit by an Austrian trench mortar shell that left fragments in his legs, and by a burst of machine-gun fire. He was later awarded the Silver Medal of Military Valor (*medaglia d'argento*) from the Italian

[1] The first written record of Hemingway's famous phrase appears in the author's April 20, 1926 letter to F. Scott Fitzgerald, in which courage is defined as "grace under pressure." (Baker 199)

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government for, although injured, he dragged a wounded Italian soldier to safety. His survival was helped by the fact that he was able to plug his wounds with cigarette butts, stopping the flow of blood.

After this experience, Hemingway spent time recovering in a Milan hospital run by the American Red Cross, where Hemingway often had a good time, drinking heavily and reading newspapers to pass the time, Peter Hays notes in his book on Hemingway. Here he met Sister Agnes von Kurowsky of Washington, D.C., one of eighteen nurses attending groups of four patients each. Hemingway fell in love with Sister Agnes, who was more than six years older than him, but their relationship did not survive his return to the United States; instead of following Hemingway to the U.S. as originally planned, she became romantically involved with an Italian officer, and this left an indelible mark on Hemingway's psyche. (Hays 58) How could he include this particular detail in a glamorous war story in which the protagonist is very much like himself, and his sweetheart is like Sister Agnes? The Italian war experience and his unfortunate love story provided inspiration for and were fictionalized in a very special way in Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms*.

Published in 1929, *A Farewell to Arms* fictionally represents the romance between Frederic Henry, an American soldier, and Catherine Barkley, a British nurse. The novel is heavily autobiographical in nature, although the final, tragic twist is new. Peter Hays supplies the details linking biography and fiction. The plot is directly inspired by Hemingway's experience with Sister von Kurowsky in Milan; the intense labor pains of his second wife, Pauline, in the birth of Hemingway's son Patrick inspired Catherine's labor in the novel; the real-life Kitty Cannell inspired the fictional Helen Ferguson; the priest was based on Don Giuseppe Bianchi, the priest of the 69th and 70th regiments of the Brigata Ancona. While the inspiration of the character Rinaldi is obscure, he had already appeared in his volume of short stories *In Our Time*. *A Farewell to Arms* was published at a time when many other World War I books were prominent, including Frederic Manning's *Her Privates We*, Erich Maria Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front*, Richard Aldington's *Death of a Hero*, and Robert Graves' *Goodbye to All That*.

As Peter Hays informs us, the title of Hemingway's book comes from George Peele's Renaissance poem of the same title, as it was anthologized in Hemingway's day (now the poem is collected as "The Old Knight" or known from its first line: "His golden locks time hath to silver turned"), about Queen Elizabeth's champion retiring from marital combat; the title also puns on the opening line of Virgil's *Aeneid*: "I sing of arms and the man." In Hemingway's novel, his protagonist, Frederic Henry, bids farewell to both the armaments of war and the arms of his beloved, Catherine Barkley. (Hays 58)

Frederic is an ambulance driver, not with the Red Cross, which Theodore Roosevelt finds unfit for young men of vigorous bodies, but acting as a lieutenant in the Italian Army in northeastern Italy. The novel begins in the fall of 1915 with a scene of domesticity among the soldiers at war, the first chapter containing two often-cited descriptions:

> The vineyards were thin and bare-branched too and all the country wet and brown and dead with the autumn...And the troops were muddy and wet in their capes; their rifles were wet and 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. (*FA* 4)

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Again, the scenery sets the tone of sterility and death, reinforced by the image of the soldiers, 'pregnant' with death. The chapter concludes: "At the start of the winter came the permanent rain and with the rain came the cholera. But it was checked and in the end only seven thousand died of it in the army." (*FA* 4)

How many may have died of cholera outside the army is not relevant to a military man, although it is known that millions of people died of influenza during the war, but the tone of 'only seven thousand dead' is hard to understand. Who is speaking of only so few deaths?

Henry takes an extended leave the following year during the winter rains, and the company priest urges Henry to visit his (the priest's) hometown high in the mountains, where the air is clear and dry "and it is understood that a man may love God. It is not a dirty joke." (*FA* 71) Now it becomes obvious that the narrator uses irony, although World War I seems to have introduced the main feature of the postmodern condition, Lyotard's incredulity toward metanarratives. Away from the ugliness of war, we are told, in the clear and dry air in the mountains, someone might love God (no kidding).

Hemingway has, as Carlos Baker first noted, created a contrast between the mountains, where things are cleaner, purer, and the valleys and plains with their horror. On his return from his leave, he is disappointed to discover that the war, and his ambulances, went on functioning without him; what is more, he meets Catherine Barkley, the British nurse's aide. Catherine has been nursing at the French front for over a year, and her fiancé was blown up in the Battle of the Somme the previous year. Now she is nursing in Italy, where she doesn't speak the language, and where – so as not to tempt the Italian troops – the British nurses are largely restricted to quarters. She is tall, and very beautiful, with long, blonde hair, and gray eyes. Henry is not insensitive to her charm, although 'love' does not seem to be the word to describe his feeling:

Catherine: "You did say you loved me, didn't you?"

Frederic: "Yes", I lied. "I love you." I had not said it before….I thought she was probably a little crazy. It was all right if she was. I did not care what I was getting into. This was better than going every evening to the house for officers where the girls climbed all over you and put your cap on backward as a sign of affection between their trips upstairs with border officers. I knew I did not love Catherine Berkley nor had any idea of loving her. This was a game. (*FA* 30)

Soon after, while waiting to evacuate wounded troops and while eating dinner, Henry is struck, as Hemingway had been, by a trench mortar shell and is returned to Milan for surgery and recuperation; Catherine is assigned to the hospital Henry was taken to, and there, before his surgery, with his wounded legs in bandages, goes to bed with him for the first time. And Henry learns that it isn't mere sex for him any longer: he loves Catherine. There is a period of recuperation, during which Catherine becomes pregnant, and Henry returns to his unit in the fall of 1917, just before the Italian retreat from Caporetto.

His assignment is to take three ambulances loaded with medical supplies from Gorizia to Pordenone, but because the main roads are crowded with retreating troop convoys and refugees, Henry tries to move his ambulances by back roads, and gets them stuck in the mud. Abandoning them, he tries to take his three men around invading German forces at Udine, where one of his soldiers is killed. At the Tagliamento River, Italian troops are checking retreaters, especially those speaking Italian with an accent (as Frederic Henry does), possible German spies, and shooting officers for allowing their men to withdraw. A sure victim (he speaks with an accent, in addition to being an officer), Henry dives into the river and deserts, making a "separate peace"; eventually he makes his way back to Milan.

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Catherine is having a few days off at Stresa on Lago Maggiore, on the Italian border, and Henry, out of uniform now, joins her there. Informed that he will be arrested as a deserter, he rows Catherine the length of the lake at night to the neutral country of Switzerland. There they await the end of the war and the birth of their child, walking, playing cards and reading. Catherine's labor is protracted, a caesarean is necessitated, but the baby is born dead, strangled by the umbilical cord, and Catherine dies of the ensuing hemorrhage.

> If people bring so much courage to this world, the world has to kill them to break them, so of course it kills them. The world breaks every one and afterward many are strong at the broken places. But those that will not break it kills. (*FA* 249) […] 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 killed you. (*FA* 327)

Although the love story adds poignancy to the war story, both end unexpectedly and tragically. At the beginning of the novel, Henry told Catherine he had never loved anyone, and he tells the priest, "I don't love". Since Frederic is so unheroic, so selfish initially, he is an unusual hero. Jake Barnes had paved the way for unheroic Hemingway protagonists: Jake doesn't win the girl, gets punched out by Cohn, but Jake is more likable than Frederic, certainly worthy of more sympathy. Jake at least takes charge of many situations. Fred is often awkward. Questioned as to why he received a medal for his wounding, "Did you do any heroic act?" Frederic replies, "No…I was blown up while we were eating cheese."

Peter Hays is very harsh on Frederic, claiming that, "other than hedonism (no heroism) and a care to perform his duty, he has no philosophy (or even the attempt at fashioning one that one sees Jake undergoing), no reason for being in the war on the Italian side, with no concern at first for anyone but himself." (Hays 60)

Catherine – who has initially suffered more than he has – gives herself to him, knowing that at first it is just a sexual game for him. She commits herself to him romantically, and in doing so commits herself back to life, painful though it may be. Like Manuel Garcia, she defines herself as someone living life as fully as she can, which for her means to be involved in a relationship, bearing a child, without a husband, and even without Fred. Her courage and example, her love and devotion convert Frederic Henry from a selfish, uncaring individual to one who loves, who shares, and who serves others. Since this is a first person narrative told by Frederic Henry, one cannot see how this lesson lasts after Catherine's death, except in the act of narration itself, a tribute to her memory. One can see, though, Henry's and Hemingway's revulsion with war, this time in very clear, unambiguous terms:

> I had seen nothing scared, 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…Abstract words such as glory, honor, courage, or hallow were obscene beside the concrete names of villages, the numbers of regiments, and the dates." (*FA* 185)

Many happenings in *A Farewell to Arms* seem to be absurd, yet are treated as normal occurrences. One such event is the doctor's absence from the hospital (in the chapters 13 to 17). To the reader, it seems outrageous that the doctor should be missing from the hospital at war time. On the other hand, the nurses find nothing unusual here - he is simply at another clinic. It becomes apparent that what the reader expects, i.e. that the doctor be present, is not a natural occurrence so much as a coincidence. Actually, the world is indifferent to such matters.

Catherine recognizes the indifference of the universe, and takes joy in the fact that Henry and herself are both alive and out of immediate danger. "Feel our hearts beating," she says when

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she sees Henry again for the first time. But Henry does not see the coincidence – to him it is natural that he survives the accident, as he has no real part in the war: "I don't care about our hearts, I want you." Catherine also reminds Henry that they are alive in an effort to ensure that his love is genuine. Out of the war, there is no longer a need to role-play, or to pretend they are lovers.

Catherine is, in many ways, the Hemingway code hero of this novel. This is particularly apparent in chapter 16, when Henry denies sleeping with anyone else and she says "It's all right. Keep right on lying to me. That's what I want you to do." Catherine knows the truth, yet at the same time denies it. She is perfectly capable of holding simultaneously two conflicting thoughts in her head, such as accepting the futility of life while struggling against it. The two protagonists, in a sense, are role-playing. However, they are also jumping head-first into a relationship and making it work, in a sense fighting the indifferent world. This is especially clear when Catherine notes that "I want what you want. There isn't any me anymore." She is giving herself to Henry, which, as the priest noted earlier, is true love and the way happiness is achieved.

In the hospital, a very important existential issue is elucidated by liquor. Those that understand the meaninglessness of the universe yet struggle against it and those that don't are distinguished by their attitude to drinking. The house doctor and Miss Van Campen do not drink, whereas Miss Gage, Catherine, Rinaldi, and Dr. Valentini all do. By refusing to drink, the doctor and nurse show that they have a strict set of principles and beliefs which simply do not appear to exist in the world around them. Those that do drink adhere to a more personal set of values that we now associate with the existentialist philosophers. Henry and Catherine must watch out for the former group of people, who will have them thrown out if they are caught having sex. On the other hand, the pair represents the latter – Catherine does not think much about the convention of marriage.

Rinaldi is one of the initiated characters – he accepts the futility of his actions, meaning that he fixes people up only so that they can go back to the front to be hurt again. However, he is no hero, for that realization has broken him. "I never think. No, by God, I don't think; I operate," he says to Henry. When he stops working, he realizes that "You're dry and you're empty and there's nothing else," and cannot stand that. The true Hemingway code hero can hold futility and necessity together, and is capable of continuing with the struggle. Rinaldi doesn't care anymore, wanting simply a clean death (an "industrial accident") instead of life.

On the other hand, the priest realizes the futility of the war, but retains hope that it will end – he believes the officers have realized that there are no winners in the war. When Henry argues that the Austrians will not stop the war at this point, the priest still protests that "I had hoped for something," and notes that this means neither defeat nor victory. That he still hopes makes the difference.

Throughout chapters 28-32 Henry is in charge of a group of ambulance drivers in retreat. They are to carry the hospital equipment to Udine. The disarray of the retreat has taken over the road, and the ambulances are caught in a column of civilian cars and war vehicles, unable to go ahead. Henry decides to leave the main road, and the group resolutely takes to the side roads. Behind them, they hear the Austrians bombing the main road. Not far from Udine, the ambulances get stuck in the mud. Fearing that the enemy will overtake them, two sergeants who had been riding along flee. Henry shoots one of them. Continuing on foot, Henry and the three remaining drivers spot German troops all over the road and realize Udine has been lost. The group retreats towards the south, during which time one of the drivers is shot by the Italian rear-guard and another runs off to surrender himself.

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Finally, Henry and Piani (the remaining member of the group) meet a column of retreating troops. There, Henry is picked out by the battle police, who believe him to be a German in an Italian uniform. The battle police are executing all officers they find separated from their troops, declaring that "It is because of treachery such as yours that we have lost the fruits of victory." Before they manage to execute him, though, Henry dives into a nearby river and follows the current downstream. Reaching the shore, he boards a train and hides under the canvas.

"There was no need to confuse our retreat," says Henry. "The size of the army and the fewness of the roads did that." The retreating people create a more chaotic scene than the battlefield, and that serves as a prime example for the indifference of the universe towards man's fate. Multitudes flee across the countryside to avoid death, but there is no escaping it. Hemingway takes great pains to show the futility of escape from battle (clearly a symbol for life). A person can take the main road and get bombed, or take the side roads and get stuck in the mud. A soldier left behind can surrender to the enemy (Bonello) or get killed by his own paranoia-stricken people (Aymo). An officer can either be executed by his angry troops, or by the battle police in need of someone on whom to blame defeat. The chaos of the retreat is best exemplified by the death of Aymo, whose "killing came suddenly and unreasonably." There is no preparation and there is no reason for anything that happens.

Apparently, the Italian battle police should make very martial, heroic characters. However, they turn out to be the most odious characters in this section. They "had that beautiful detachment and devotion to stern justice of men dealing in death without being in any danger of it." These people are inflexible, still conforming to the notions of "justice" and "victory" which Henry has already dismissed, and they fail to realize that there is no longer any point in the war. Their activity is obviously pointless, and the principles they seem to follow have vanished. When Henry leaves the army, he does not experience any sense of loyalty towards these men – only contempt for people that are far from heroic.

Running away from action, deserting, might not look very respectable in a narrative involving a true hero. In Hemingway's novel, there is the need of a ritual to give solemnity to this act. The cleansing imagery of the river is a sort of secular baptism for Henry, washing away his obligation to the army. When lying on the guns in the train Henry formulates a way to make sense of the meaninglessness of life, "You did not love the floor of a flat-car nor guns with canvas jackets and the smell of vaselined metal or a canvas that rain leaked through," he explains, "but you loved someone else whom now you knew was not even to be pretended there." A person does not focus his attention on the senselessness of life itself, but struggles to create order in it. In Henry's case, his relationship with Catherine defies life's meaninglessness in a world dominated by war, which has lost its centre.

The first half of Book Five finds Henry and Catherine in the mountains of Switzerland during the winter, enjoying the peace and quiet of domestic life. The people in the surrounding villages are cheerful, and to Henry the ongoing war is remote. The only serious problem is Catherine's pregnancy, for there is serious concern over what to do with the child: "She won't come between us, will she?" asks Catherine.

One might say, the war brought the two lovers together, and now, ironically, the main threat to their relationship is posed by the still unborn baby. In a way, the coming of the baby will amount to the end, as it turns out soon. When spring comes the couple move into a nearby town where there is a hospital, and after a few weeks the pains begin. At the hospital, Catherine is in labor for hours. At first she copes with the pains bravely, but soon things become more

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difficult, as the baby does not come. After a while, the doctor declares that he must perform a Caesarian on Catherine. The baby turns out to be dead, strangled by its cord. Catherine dies soon after the operation: "She had one hemorrhage after another. They couldn't stop it." Alone, Henry walks through the rain back to the hotel.

The serenity and simple happiness which Henry and Catherine find at the beginning of this section is more or less like the eye of an approaching typhoon. This kind of life is the one Henry and Catherine both seek after what they have been through – one where there is nothing to worry about and nothing that needs to be done. The pregnancy, however, promises to ruin this idyllic lifestyle by bringing responsibilities and worries into their lives. "She won't come between us, will she?" worries Catherine. It also creates a sense of urgency that foreshadows Catherine's death: "it gave us both a feeling as though something was hurrying us and we could not lose any time together." Indeed, from the very opening chapter, images of pregnancy have been linked to war and death, as when the soldiers "marched as though they were six months gone with child."

Initially, Catherine bravely copes with the pains, as the difficulty she has to endure. She appears to be a good illustration of the Hemingway code hero, and stoically smiles when the pains diminish from time to time. However, gradually her endurance is too much. She is beginning to confess defeat, as if her bravery consisted in her controlling her reaction to pain, rather than just accepting it and the progress of her labor ordeal: "I'm not brave any more, darling. I'm all broken. They've broken me." As the labour continues, she starts fearing death and she can no longer stand the impassibility of the universe. But then she bravely regains some sort of control: "I won't die. I won't let myself die," she tells Henry, believing that she can defy hostile fate.

Henry has said a farewell to arms, but the threats he and Catherine face appear to be unsurmountable. He finds himself breaking down. At the beginning, when he takes Catherine to the hospital, he does not try to deny the hostility of blind fate, reminiscent of other tragic stories: "this was the price you paid for sleeping together. This was the end of the trap. This was what people got for loving each other." As labor goes on, he finds it increasingly difficult to face the world, and keeps telling himself, "What reason is there for her to die?" The question may be linked to his statement in Book One that "I knew I would not be killed. Not in this war. It did not have anything to do with me." The world appears too indifferent to his reasoning. In the final stages of the operation, Henry begins to cry out to God in despair – crying out for a reason behind the universe, but his cries get no reply from Providence.

Catherine's death confirms Hemingway's outlook. Her tragic end is a consequence of her pregnancy, and pregnancy a consequence of love. Both in war and in love, the universe, hostile or indifferent, kills indiscriminately or purposefully. Henry understands this, and says in the final chapter: "That was what you did. You died. You did not know what it was about. You never had any time to learn." It is difficult to imagine, given the incompletion of any text, including this novel, whether Henry is supposed to learn anything out of this sad story, since he has more time than Catherine. When Henry leaves the hospital at the end of the novel, he seems to have already accepted her death as something out of his control. He does not romanticize it nor does he seek any reasons. He walks away in the rain, which Catherine feared, but Henry accepts, in another ritual gesture. The need for ritual, like "grace under pressure" and endurance, are the characteristics each central character in Hemingway's fiction, especially war fiction, aspires to.

The true Hemingway code hero (exemplified here by Catherine, but to which Henry also aspires) presupposes the indifference of the universe and the development of a personal set of

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principles. This calls for many things, the first of which being a disbelief in God – to Hemingway, such faith was a cheap way of falsely instilling order upon existence (this is where the priest falls short). Because there is no God, there are no universal moral codes, no abstract values such as "justice" or "glory," and certainly no need for moral conventions. The code hero rejects these, but imposes order upon his life through personal values – integrity, dignity, courage, etc. This is what Catherine knows from the beginning and Henry learns in the course of the war. In essence, the hero learns that he, himself, is a crucial source of meaning. Finally, such a character must accept the finality of death, painfully aware that he is caught in a meaningless existence. He fears death, but is not afraid of dying.

Disillusionment is not part of being a hero. Rinaldi does not rise to the heroic status because when he realizes the truth about the universe, he becomes disenchanted. The true hero can hold this futility in his mind while, at the same time, creating meaning and order through the struggle which is life. He does this first by looking for a worthy opponent to struggle against (in *A Farewell to Arms* this is the war which Henry attempts to free himself from). He endures the pains of life without complaint, knowing them to be a part of life. He does not cheat, but adheres to his personal values (as seen in the horse races). In the end, there is no victory which awaits the hero - winning the struggle is impossible. Consequently, it is irrelevant: what matters is his heroism. Henry fights the meaninglessness of life through his love affair with Catherine, among many other things. The universe, of course, challenges that love many times and wins in the end, but Henry's struggle is a heroic one.

A Farewell to Arms is strongly saturated in images of nature, many of which serving to highlight the thematic framework against which war, death and the hero are set. Most of them can be found in the first chapter, where Hemingway juxtaposes images of fertility and life against those of death, and this juxtaposition reoccurs in many places throughout the novel. Perhaps the two most prominent symbols in this work are rain and mud. It is raining outside almost every time something bad occurs, such as the army's retreat or Catherine's death, and rain serves to mark these events as accidental occurrences (just like rain itself). Similarly, the mud serves as an obstacle to the army in both offensive and retreat, thus demonstrating nature's hostility to man.

Rain also serves as a life-affirming symbol, one which baptizes Henry when he decides to desert the Italian army. Hemingway places all control, both curse and blessing, into the hands of the world and not of man. Snow and winter contrast the hot, dust-filled battlefield and the act of drinking alcohol is typical of those characters who have abandoned social conventions, but who have developed their own existential code. Drinking thus acquires an ennobling nature, which heavy drinkers will probably appreciate in the Hemingway code hero.

The presence of the narrator is initially detached from life, and also serves to paint an uncompromising picture of the war. Additionally, it is used to produce a realistic narrative from Henry's point of view, shying away from elaborate schemes and descriptions. Because of it, nothing in the novel is romanticized. The love between Henry and Catherine is far from glamorized at first, and in Hemingway's hands it becomes more of a function of existence rather than the primary romantic focus of the novel.

Finally, as a good modernist author who takes T.S. Eliot seriously, Hemingway is well-known for his use of objective correlatives, this novel being no exception. The vivid details, from crowded trains to gaudy hotel rooms, often serve no purpose other than to paint a special mood for the reader. However, what is quite evident for his novel, in *A Farewell to Arms* Hemingway's war hero is a typical female, Catherine. Through her relationship with Henry she shows all the

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attributes necessary for heroism: courage, integrity, dignity, comradeship, love and the ability to offer the ultimate sacrifice, her own life for another (dying in child birth). However, to a lesser extent, *A Farewell to Arms* can also be considered an anti-war novel, as the vivid descriptions of its brutality and futility attest to. Paradoxically, these vivid descriptions are not the result of Hemingway's first hand war experience as much as conscientious documentation work, as Michael Reynolds asserts:

> From maps, books and close listening, he has made up a war he never saw, described terrain he never walked, and re-created the retreat from Caporetto so accurately that his Italian readers will later say that he was present at that national embarrassment. (Reynolds 1997: 60)

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