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## **Amorous Love in the Novels of Earnest Hemingway: A Romantic Study of *A Farewell to Arms***

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*A Farewell to Arms* depicts man at war and irrevocably linked with him is man in love. Death and life grapple with each other and the chances of man's resurrection out of death. In the introduction to 'Man at War', Hemingway says that one can learn a lot about the human heart and the human in war from the book. It won't be an exaggeration to say the same thing about 'A Farewell to Arms'. The condition of the human heart and mind corresponds to two inextricable stands the theme of love and war, in structure of novel. Actually these are the two aspects of the human condition as visible in the modern times. Hemingway uses war as a metaphor for the general condition of man's existence in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. As many critics have suggested war has now become a deep and permanent crisis in the public affairs of all nations.

### **Introduction:**

The novel is divided into five books. In the first book, Rinaldi introduces Frederic Henry to Catherine Barkley; Frederic attempts to seduce her, and their relationship begins. While on the Italian front, Frederic is wounded in the knee by a mortar shell and sent to a hospital in Milan. The second book shows the growth of Frederic and Catherine's relationship as they spend time together in Milan over the summer. Frederic falls in love with Catherine and, by the time he is healed, Catherine is three months pregnant. In the third book, Frederic returns to his unit, but not long afterwards the Austrians break through the Italian lines in the Battle of Caporetto, and the Italians retreat. Frederic kills an engineering sergeant for insubordination. After falling behind and catching up again, Frederic is taken to a place by the "battle police", where officers are being interrogated and executed for the "treachery" that supposedly led to the Italian defeat. However, after seeing and hearing that everyone interrogated is killed, Frederic escapes by jumping into a river. In the fourth book, Catherine and Frederic reunite and flee to Switzerland in a rowboat. In the final book, Frederic and Catherine live a quiet life in the mountains until she goes into labor. After a long and painful birth, their son is stillborn. Catherine begins to hemorrhage and soon dies, leaving Frederic to return to their hotel in the rain. Love in the novels of Hemingway is not a sentimental affair where lovers cry and long for one another. His concept of love unlike that of Charles Dickens is realistic and an urgent need of body and mind which explains why lovers in the novels of Hemingway establish sexual and emotional intimacy. Love like war takes place and is a stormy affair and just as war ends in time so does love ends in separation or death.

### **Hemingway's own Experience Delineated:**

The presentation of war in 'A Farewell to Arms' is so realistic that one is compelled to believe that it was a way of finding a release for his turmoil of war for Hemingway. His impression was so deep and final as to make it seem that the war experience released rather than inhibited them. We may say to paraphrase Voltaire that if there had been no war it would have been necessary for Hemingway to invent one.

### **Depiction of the Horrors of War and Disintegration of Human Values:**

'A Farewell to Arms' presents a world in which destruction is the ruling motive. A horrifying description of death, destruction and despair covers the major portion of the book. The opening paragraph of novel itself hints at the disintegration impact of war. The quiet but pregnant statement at the end of the first chapter, "At the start of the winter come the perm ant rain and with the rain

came cholera” But it was checked and in the end only seven thousand died of it in the army, leaves nobody in any doubt what is there to follow in the rest of the book – disintegration in the world. To give an example of the crushing effect of war on human beings - Catherine weighed down by a bitter sense of loss tells Henry how she was going to marry. She has been deeply wounded emotionally and her sudden outburst causes Henry to think of her as ‘a little crazy’. She who had preserved her virginity for over eight years in deference to the dictates of conventional morality actually sleeps with Henry on the very first opportunity. The war has taught her to live from day to day and forge values as she goes along. There are no more absolutes left in life. It is not surprising that love becomes her religion; even death loses its sanctity. She calls it a dirty trick. Frederic Henry’s participation in the war is that of an observer who is not touched by war. The war to him is like the one in the movies. Henry seems to be sure of his own immortality. It is only when Henry becomes a victim of the brutalities of war that he realizes that one simply can’t remain an observer. His sense of security-implicit is his attitude towards the war as a spectator is shattered by Austrian bombing. Passini, his ambulance driver sitting next to him in ditch is killed. It could be Henry. In the first aid tend the doctors are red with blood like butchers. The ambulance carrying the wounded turn into hearses as the soldiers die of internal haemorrhage before reaching the hospital. The war makes no discrimination between the angels of mercy and the demons of cruelty. Heroism is a thing of the past because in the mechanized warfare, the victim is not ever seen by the man presses the button. Values of the past lie abandoned on the dung heap of obsolescence. The Retreat opens quite a few eyes to the harsh reality of the war. Henry finds it shocking when he is instructed to carry hospital equipment in his car and leave the wounded to their fate. The war has its destructive impact upon the civilian population too forcing them out their homes. The caravan of homeless people across the muddy fields towards an unknown destination is endless, uncertain and erratic. Henry shoots a sergeant of his own army. Fredric Henry thus embodies in his experiences the experience of countless Native Americans who joined the war but return bitter and wrecked. We cannot but justify the words of Passini, “There is nothing as bad as war. We in the auto ambulance cannot realize at all how bad it is”

### **Not a Great War – Novel:**

In the book the narrative pattern in Hemingway’s fiction. Dr. Chaman Nahal has advanced the view that ‘A Farewell to Arms’ is not a great war novel. He says, “The novel neither register an atmosphere of war nor records acts of war as in great war-novels like ‘War and Peace’ or ‘All’s Quite on the Western Front’. He is of the view that though apparently the theme deals with the subjects of war novel. He remarks that it is more a love story than a war novel because the actual scenes of battle in the novel are very few and war is almost forgotten after Henry and Catherine land in Switzerland. But most of the critics and readers do not agree with this view and the more accepted opinion is that ‘A Farewell to Arms’ can be placed next to Tolstoy’s ‘War and Peace’. The setting for ‘A Farewell to Arms’ is the war and the romance of Frederic Henry and Catherine develops in a war afflicted atmosphere. The two themes war and love have been dexterously interlinked into a tragic pattern. It is a story of war and love in five books. In the book I & III the war theme is dominant and II & IV the emphasis is on the love theme. In the book V it is farewell to both. But even the novel having love as the dominant theme, the motive of war is not forgotten. Even after the successful attempt of Henry and Catherine to enter Switzerland, the war catches up with them. In the beginning of the book II Henry tells barman – ‘Don’t talk about war. The war was a long way off. May be there was not any war?’ The death of Catherine, however remote in its setting from that of the war is placed in sharp equations with defeating and confusing terror of the war. In this connection Leo Gurko remarks – The war outlasts the lovers.

### **Henry's Attitude towards Love:**

Henry's attitude to love has many variations. He knows that he neither loves nor has any intention of loving Catherine. For him, "This was a game like Bridge in which you said things instead of playing cards". With realization of his self after he gets hurt on the front, comes the realization of love for Catherine. Realizing self and falling in love with Catherine are in fact two sides of the same coin. Love comes as a changing factor in his life and he becomes immersed in it so much so that even in the midst of the battle he cannot forget Catherine is so potent that it brings about an inner transformation in him. So far as love is concerned it is an experience sufficient by itself and it does not need to be legalized by marriage. His reactions to Catherine at first were physical. He would prefer to sleep with her than go to house of prostitution. But he becomes more and more involved with Catherine. He sees in their relationship a type of order, a type of commitment to a regular existence.

### **Love the Essence of Catherine's Existence:**

Catherine Barkley has lost her faith in conventional religion and made a religion for herself out of love for Frederic. Like Brett in the 'The Sun Also Rises' she has no wish to go to the church but whereas Brett has the pagan ethics of "deciding not to be bitch ..... instead of God", the portrait of Catherine reminds us rather of the Dantesque vision. There is a quality of innocence and purity in the unreserved, whole hearted love that she feels for Frederic and that has become her religion. She says, "But I haven't any religion ..... you're my religion. You're my religion. You're all I've got". She was apparently hit hard by the loss of her lover but that event has not destroyed her vulnerability. Her whole life consists in multiplying experiences in an attempt to revive the feeling she had once known with someone and then lost. But it would be unfair to say that she merely uses Fredric lies in the fact that it obliterates all that has gone before in her life. She merges her own personality with Fredric's so much so that she becomes the only source of Henry's happiness. Fredric tells her, "My life used to be full of everything. Now if you aren't with me, I have not a thing in the world". It is a love that requires no formality of marriage. It is a union of two devoted hearts. When Henry learns she is pregnant he wants to get married for her sake but Catherine professes that she already feels like a married woman. "Don't talk as though you had to make an honest woman of me darling. I am a very honest woman. You cannot be ashamed of something, if you're only happy and proud of it." The completeness of her surrender is cleared from the following declarations "I'll say just what you wish and I'll do what you wish and then you will never want any other girls, will you" and "I'll do what you want and say what you want and then I'll be a great success, won't I?" and "You see I'll do anything you want" and "I want what you want. There isn't any me anymore. Just what you want" etc. this woman is all worship all adoration for her lover. She says, "I won't ever leave you for someone else. I suppose all sorts of dreadful thing will happen. But you don't have to worry about that". She does not judge Henry by any worldly standards such as his official rank. The following observations by her are significant and throw much light on her temperament. She says to Henry- "You have a splendid rank. I don't want you to have any more rank. It might go to your head. Oh darling, I'm awfully glad you're not conceited. I'd have married you even if you were conceited but it's very restful to have a husband who is not conceited". She has completely merged herself with him so much that she would like to have her hair cut short so that she might look like him-- "Oh, darling I want you so much I want to be you too". In short the intensity of her love for Henry is beyond words. Her love is simply marvelous and magnificent.

### **Treatment of Love and Hemingway's- Romeo and Juliet:**

Hemingway himself placed a lot of importance on the love factor in 'A Farewell to Arms'. He gave it paramount importance in his tragic writing. So much so that he referred to the story of Henry and Catherine as his Romeo and Juliet. Love is undoubtedly the central theme of 'A Farewell to Arms'

and it was because of this element that the novel became very popular soon after its publication. The affair between Catherine Barkley and her patient Lieutenant Frederic Henry begins causally and romantically enough but it develops into an overwhelming romantic ardour of forever which is disapproved by conventional social sanction only because of the disturbed conditions under which it flowers and which culminates in an effect of overwhelming pathos when Catherine dies in childbirth. Many critics accused Hemingway of infantilism in his treatment of love. His women, they allege, represent boy's erotic fantasies. Love at first sight is something we often come across in literature we cannot therefore look upon it as something unconvincing. If we are going to refuse to accept Catherine and Henry because they give themselves to each other in haste what becomes to Romeo and Juliet and all the rest. Robert Penn Warren has shown how Henry's encounters with the priest lend religious significance to 'A Farewell to Arms' by pointing out the quest for meaning behind his careless life. In the end with the death of Catherine, Frederic discovers that the attempt to find substitute for universal meaning, in limited meaning of personal relationship is doomed to failure. It may be that this consideration was larger in the critic's mind than it did in that of the author. The criticism of Hemingway's treatment of love has been made from another point of view by Aldridge in his book, "*After The Lost Generation*". This criticism is that love is not sufficiently dominating in this novel and it has become subordinate and secondary to the theme of war. The love in the novel emerges from what Edmond Wilson called the alien necessities of which it had up to then, been merely an accident and prepared the way for the real intimacy which by their persistent interference those necessities demanded. Why then does the love, now that it is at last free to complete itself seem so strangely inadequate particularly when we realize that it must now become real to balance the unreality of the war. Always before it love is most intensely real both to Frederic Henry and to us. When it is farthest from its object, when Henry is alone with it and pitted against the impediments which denied its fulfillment, it is most real. Even when Henry and Catherine are together in Milan it is real only by virtue of the hostility of the forces which surrounded it. But when the requirements of his story compel Hemingway to remove the lovers from the war altogether he finds himself outside the violence which gives it significance. Violence set the key for the entire relationship. Thus the treatment of love in the novel has not been fully satisfying for the critics but it is definitely an important factor of the novel's appeal for the readers. A number of critics have also agreed with Hemingway that 'A Farewell to Arms' is his "Romeo and Juliet". The view of Earl Ravit is however different from the prevailing one. He thinks that there are only superficial similarities between Hemingway's work and Shakespeare's romantic tragedy. The most obvious parallel is that Henry and Catherine like their Elizabethan counterparts may be seen as star crossed lovers. Hemingway might also have been thinking of how rapidly Romeo and Juliet whose affair had begun as a mere flirtation passed over into the status of relatively native lovers. Neither in 'Romeo and Juliet' nor in 'A Farewell to Arms' is the catastrophe a direct and logical result of the immoral social situations Catherine's bodily structure which precludes a normal delivery for her baby is an unfortunate biological accident. The detention of the friar who is bearing the message. The Veronese Feud does not kill Juliet directly in the same way as the war does not kill Catherine directly. But in the emotional experience of the novel, Catherine's dying is directly associated and interwoven with the whole tragic pattern of which war is itself the broad social manifestation. The same can be said about 'Romeo and Juliet' too. The only difference is that in 'Romeo and Juliet' both the lover die whereas in 'A Farewell to Arms' death comes to Catherine only though for Henry too devoid of all happiness and support as he is, life itself is worse than death. In the structure the novel resembles a five act drama. Ray B. West says that it is composed in series of scenes and each scene is broken into actions which might be linked to stage direction and dialogues. Thus in section I, we have the introduction of all major characters, the general war setting and statement of the problem involved. In section III, the retreat at Caporetto and the decision of Henry to escape the chaos of war; in section IV, the supposed escape, the rowing of the hero and heroine across the lake into Switzerland and in section V, the



hope of sanctuary which through a reversal of fortunes in the drama comes to a climax in the ironic scene of Catherine's death while giving birth to their child.

### **The Title of the Novel:**

Thus the two themes of love and war merge together and move simultaneously in the novel. But ultimately it is farewell to both – to the war and to the beloved. War reveals all its horrors to Henry and realizes that there is nothing at all at the center of human existence. The title of the novel came from the Oxford Book of English verse where it is the title of a poem by an Elizabethan poet George Peele. Hemingway chose the title to express the idea that man must bid farewell to arms and stop fighting. The romantic attitude that glorifies war is a hollow sham. Love is the richest experience of human life; it is not capable of sustaining men and women, throughout their lives. Death is the greater reality and love cannot triumph over death, however sincere and genuine it may be. In war too it is the death of innocent people that shocks him and in love too he is disillusioned by the death of Catherine unexpectedly. In the end what confronts Henry is Nada-nothing.

### **Summing up:**

Thus in the novel Hemingway tells tragic love story in the backdrop of the World War I the quintessence of love is portrayed by Henry in the midst of all that is the most cruel in the war but he actually wants to express is significant for all times. It is the vision of the condition of men under pressure that he presents in 'A Farewell to Arms' which is pathetic indeed. The poignance of story is beautiful orchestrated to heart wrenching finale of the novel. There is contrast in the two themes. But ultimately we feel convinced that it is neither love nor war which is salient feature dominating the novel. It is the concept of man pitted against the unknown who dominates the proceedings - be it in the factor of war or love. Be what may the theme of 'A Farewell to Arms' touches an emotional chord in the heart of every feeling man and woman. It is the convention that death is the ultimate reality that is left in the minds of the readers.

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