
THE ANTI WAR MESSAGE OF HEMINGWAY'S A FAREWELL TO ARMS

Wael Fadhil Hasobi

Abstract: *A Farewell to Arms* reveals through its protagonist's journey of war the physical and psychological destructions of the individuals during World War I. The novel contains fictional and factual elements and these elements together serve to detail the events of war, the irrational fabric of the world, the physical and psychological suffering, and the tragic end. Hemingway pictures the brutality of war as well as the chaotic and irrational world at the war time.

Keywords: Disillusionment, fact and fantasy, the literary reality, the brutality of war. Physical and psychological destructions

Introduction: For years, Hemingway had been trying to write about his war experience of 1918 and to dramatize within it his own wounding of his love affair with Agnes Von Kurowsky. He has been thought to tell a short story of love and war but then with Fitzgerald's advice to write about something hurts in life he set out his third novel *A Farewell to Arms*. The novel is the second major one and is based as it happened to his first major one *The Sun Also Rises* on autobiographical experience. *A Farewell to Arms* has got its first publication in 1929 with six parts serial publication in Scribner's Magazine with a narrative begins in late summer of 1915, as World War I heats up on the north eastern Italian front, and ends in March 1918 with the death in childbirth of the novel's heroine, Catherine Barkley. Despite the fact that Max Perkins and Robert Bridges, the editors of Scribner's magazine, have showed their resentment to some of the words in the typescript which asserted by Carlos Baker saying "Max read the typescript and pronounced it magnificent, but he shook his head over some of the soldierly language. Bridges, said he lugubriously, might not be able to sterilize it after all" (Baker, 1969, p.199) but Hemingway has got the admiration and approval of both editors soon after his agreement to substitute these words by dashes and to get an offer of \$ 16,000 which is the largest sum to be paid for first serial rights.

The protagonist of the novel Frederic Henry, resembles his creator, is an American citizen who has joined the Italian army ambulance corps during World War I without having any particular loyalty to Italy but to be part of the adventure. World War I took place between the Allied powers against the Central powers in a period continued from 1914 to 1918 and the battlefields of it included several fronts in Europe. The Italians whom they were part of the Allied powers were forced to retreat at the end of 1917 from the static front that they had previously captured from the Austrians. Though the Germans whom they were part of the Central powers had succeeded to force the Italian to retreat and as well as

to get victory on the western front in France in 1918 but the war ended with the Allied victory and the defeat of the Austro-Hungarians by the Italians at battle of Vittorio Veneto in 1918. Since Hemingway had joined the army during the World War I and experienced its burdens, his central focus with his novel *A Farewell to Arms* as he did with *The Sun Also Rises* on the physical and psychological destructions of the characters that resulted from this war with a combination of fact and fantasy; Arthur Waldhorn notes that "As in *The Sun Also Rises*, Hemingway blends fact and fantasy. Frederic's knee wound is analogous to Hemingway's, but not the head injury." (Waldhorn, 2002, p.113) Hemingway participation in the war has enabled him to reflect in a literary reality the subject matter of violence, love, and death. He considered his experience of war as a great adventure to shape the literary reality of his writings and to recognize him from other writers who didn't experience it; he once told Fitzgerald that "It [the war] was one of the major subjects and certainly one of the hardest to write truly of, those writers who had not seen it were always very jealous and tried to make it seem an important or abnormal or a disease as a subject, while really it was just something quite irreplaceable that they had missed." (*Green Hills of Africa*, 1965, p. 74)

The novel has been shaped into five books and the narrator and protagonist of the novel Frederic Henry whose rank is lieutenant narrates at the beginning of Book 1 the peaceful setting of northeast Italy blending it with the description of the landscapes, the weather and the climate. He begins the novel with the famous paragraph:

In the late summer of that year we lived in a house in a village that looked across the river and the plain to the mountain. In the bed of the river there were pebbles and boulders, dry and white in the sun, and the water was clear and swiftly moving and blue in the channels. Troops went by the house and down the road and the dust they raised powdered the leaves of the trees. The trunks of the trees too were dusty and the leaves fell early that year and we saw the troops

marching along the road and the dust rising and leaves ,stirred by the breeze ,falling and the soldiers marching and afterward the road bare and white except for the leaves. (*A Farewell to Arms*, 2004, p.3)

The passage describes the Italian border with Slovenia in a small town named Gorizia and it indicates where the protagonist is with his military unit .Gorizia is the town where the British hospital has been settled there also and near this town a romantic love story begins between Frederic Henry and the heroine of the novel Catherine whom she is a volunteer assistant nurse in the British hospital. Within the gloomy mood of the passage , Frederic remarks to what is to happen and then continues narrating that seven thousand in the army have been died of cholera which is resulted from the permanent rain of winter

The physical and psychological suffering of the soldiers at war has been described earlier in the novel by Hemingway showing his anti-war attitude through his character's comments. Lt. Henry watches the soldiers and remarks that "they were sweaty, dusty and tired . Some looked pretty bad . A soldier came along after the last of the stragglers . He was walking with a limp ." (*A Farewell to Arms* ,2004, P.32) The author reveals that the nature of war brings suffering for all and details through Frederic's journey of love and war the physical and psychological destruction of the characters ; another of Hemingway's own view of the war has been expressed by the major of Frederic's unit when he mentions that " I am very tired of this war .If I was away I do not believe I would come back." (*A Farewell to Arms*, 2004, P.149) and then Hemingway adds through Rinaldi that " I am very depressed by it [the war]." (*A Farewell to Arms*, 2004, P.150)

As it happened in Hemingway's earlier works such as *In Our Time* and *the Sun Also Rises* ,*A Farewell to Arms* has also revealed the author's resentment of war and politicians and before Frederic's full disillusionment of this war occurs , this resentment and political disillusionment has been revealed by many of the author's characters ; Pissani once points out that ' There is nothing as bad as war. We in the auto -ambulance can not even realize at all how bad it is." (*A Farewell to Arms*, 2004,P.47) Soon thereafter Pissani adds " There is a class that controls a country that is stupid and does not realize anything and never can. That is why we have this warAlso they make money out of it." (*A Farewell to Arms* ,2004, P.48) The

author's own view through Pissani has been asserted again through the priest who declares that " There are people who would make war .in this country there are many like that."(*A Farewell to Arms*, 2004, P.65)

The antiwar message of Hemingway has been achieved ultimately at the bridge scene when the Italian soldiers make an attempt to cross the bridge during the retreat from Caporetto ; Frederic who is far enough from the Italian battle police at the bridge understands that he will be executed as he sees that the prepared answer , whatever is, for the battle police officers gets its end with a shot. His dive into Tagliamento river has been sorted as a baptism into salvation ; Frederic is no longer a member of this war and this baptism leads him to a new life where horror , killing and hatred have no place ; Robert Penn Warren remarks that " By this ' baptism' Frederic is reborn into another world , he comes out into the world of the man alone , no longer supported by and involved in society." (Warren , 1953, P.32) Lt . Henry is no more part of this war and though he respects many there but he looks for separate peace that enables him to find much to live for and to add meaning to his life ; he comments that " There were the good ones ; and the brave ones ,and the calm ones , and the sensible ones , and they deserved it .But it was not my show any more and I wished this bloody train would get to Mestre and I would eat and stop thinking. I would have to stop." (*A Farewell to Arms* ,2004,P.206) Frederic is no more showing acceptance to the concept that life is absurd and futile ; he finds that his separate peace and the futility of life emerges from his love affair with Catherine that he intends to develop.

Conclusion: Frederic Henry ,the protagonist, is an American who serves as a lieutenant in the Italian army to a group of ambulance drivers and has been appeared as a lost man searching for order and value. He joins the war as an adventure but thereafter he realizes how pointless the war is ; this war has brought him and the others the fear and suffering .Though Frederic shows courage and comradeship at the war zone but he has no acceptance for it ; he realizes that the war has caused the men to lose hope and faith and realizes that the war is brutal; thus he has come to the conclusion that there is no honor in the war and desert it searching for a valuable meaning of his life in which he finds it in his love affair with the heroine of the novel.

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Wael Fadhil Hasobi

PhD Scholar English Dept. Acharya Nagarju na University
4-16-25E, Bahertpetha, Guntur, Andrah Pradesh