

“A Modern Man in the Trap.” Re-understanding *A Farewell to Arms* in It’s Historical Subtext: A New Historicist’s Reading

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Abstract

This paper draws on the New Historicist reading of *A Farewell to Arms*. It argues on the protagonist, Lieutenant Frederic Henry’s experience of WWI and how he feels distanced from his root. He is haunted by the meaninglessness of his life. His bidding farewell to the war and elopement, though shows him a lead a good life in the beginning, results in futile ultimately. A New Historicist reading of the novel explores that Hemingway juxtaposes the social and political context in the novel. Making Henry in his destitute condition, Hemingway delivers a message of cruelty throughout. The peace he signs with Catherine is merely a part-time happiness that Henry thoroughly fails to understand. In short, Henry’s life reflects how Hemingway shatters the idea of association and peace when wars break out. That is why Henry meditates on Catherine’s death in Switzerland, where they find themselves out of all warfare. In the beginning, Henry is dominated by the spirit of the American Dream until it cracks down; secondly, by the heroism of WWI until he is physically injured and thirdly, by Catherine’s love until she dies. To Hemingway, he becomes short. In fact, the analysis finds out a modern man in the trap.

Key words: Ernest Hemingway; *A Farewell to Arms*; New Historicism; War; Love; Alienation

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INTRODUCTION

Ernest Hemingway is known as a great literary artist of the modern period. He is an American writer who has contributed six novels, many short stories, two non-fictional works and few autobiographical works to the canon of literature in English. What is the most noticeable feature of his novels is their ability to evoke a historical subtext. The historical subtext in his novels reflects Hemingway’s own experience of alienation. His masterpiece, *A Farewell to Arms* (1929) expresses his experience of alienation in its fullest. This essay will focus on this underlying meaning of Hemingway’s *A farewell to Arms*, that is to say, the historical alienation from the otherwise of the happy life of the 1920’s. In fact, *A Farewell to Arms* portrays a world of segregation where human feels distanced from their root. In particular, Ernest Hemingway’s portrayal of Lieutenant Frederic Henry as a hero can be said to impersonate this feeling alienation or rootlessness from what he believes was his true American identity. He suffers from alienation because of his inability to find a meaning of life.

To get a better understanding of the importance of alienation in Hemingway’s *A Farewell to Arms* this essay will draw on New Historicist criticism. Louis Montrose argues that New Historicism is concerned with “the historical, social, and political conditions and consequences of literary production and reproduction” (Montrose, p.584). He also suggests a link between the history and the text of which he says “the Historicity of Text and the Textuality of History” (Montrose, p.588). Another prominent New Historicist, John Brannigan suggests “New historicism is a mode of critical interpretation which privileges power relation as the most important context for all kinds” (Brannigan, p.6). To highlight Brannigan’s concept of power relation in a text Michel Foucault’s reading of new historicism can be taken as an example. Michel Foucault argues that “Historians long ago began to write the history of the body which

is directly involved in a political field; power relations have an immediate hold upon it; they invest it, mark it, train it, torture it, force it to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies, to emit signs” (Foucault, p.545). In short, the body is what is believed by Foucault to be dominated under a power.

According to the New Historicist's viewpoint the relation between the history and the text and the concept of power relation is clearly grounded in *A Farewell to Arms* in its historical context which results in loss of identity of Henry caused by W W I. The novel can be interpreted from its social and political background of the war when Henry relentlessly seeks for a meaning of life while it does not exist at all. The novel delineates Henry's alienation which occurs three times. In particular, he is alienated from his American identity and later he is alienated from the war hoping for a peaceful life with Catherine but he is again alienated from her. War has unleashed its frantic energy in the world which changes life all of a sudden. My essay will also concentrate on the power relationship between the cruel war which results in alienation and Henry's hopes for the future represented by Catherine. Henry is disillusioned by W W I. The war is thought to have been more powerful that he breaks down eventually. From the New Historicist reading of the novel, it can be explored that W W I is the governing force and man the subjected. In addition, the New Historicist argues on this point of self-subjection of man and suggests that subjection is self-fashion under a supreme power. Similarly, following this it can also be suggested that Henry's joining the war is his self-subjection and at the same time self-fashion under the Great War. This concept of self-fashioning will be used in the analysis below to illustrate how Henry is subjected by the ideology of war and masculinity.

Finally, Henry's self-fashioned identity is seen to be re-fashioned by his retreat from the war. He is identified as free individual in Switzerland. But his escape from his previously self-fashioned identity into being free individual is shown to be futile. His attempt to re-establish meaning in life is once again shown to be futile in the symbolic wasteland where he is left in inevitable alienation. Thus, Hemingway's vision of life and family is shown to be a vision of alienation. He shows a kind of tragic irony in Henry's futile search for the meaning of life with Catherine, whose death in the end presages that mankind in time of war is destined for alienation rather than social belonging.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

Much has been written about *A Farewell to Arms* (1929) by Ernest Hemingway. The novel is vehemently criticized from A Feminist perspective because they accuse Hemingway of presenting women as commodity

in the novel. Hemingway's unveiling of brothels for the soldiers in the time of war have proved his chauvinistic characteristic. Additionally, Catherine's initial seduction caused by Henry can also be seen as gender hierarchy. Jamie Barlowe- Kayes in his article, “Performing the Feminine” criticizes Hemingway for presenting “Women are inspiration, muses, sexual temptation and release from sexual tension, they serve as nurturers, solvers of domestic problems and creators of conditions which allow men to go on accomplishing- and making decisions. Even Hemingway's ways of holding women in esteem marginalized them- kept them as objects, playthings and nurturers, allotting them no domestic power” (28). Some gender critics accuse Hemingway of presenting an extreme masculine code of conduct in male characters.

As Marc Hewson puts it in his article, “Gender A Farewell to Arms”, one of the implications of a “patriarchal culture...founded on sacrifice, crime, [and] war” is the need men often feel to prove themselves militarily to claim their masculine birthright (Irigaray, quoted in Whitford 11). Hemingway's hero experiences this also, trying, early in the novel, to use his military status to define himself” (4). Similarly, he considers Cixous' comment on the western ideal of the hierarchy of gender “all people are innately both masculine and feminine. Unfortunately western culture has historically privileged masculinity at the expense of the feminine, creating a hierarchy of gender in which the masculine value is positive and the feminine negative” (3).

To highlight Frederic Henry's character Hemingway introduces Rinaldi who is thought to be the replica of Henry. Both are presented as true cultural embodiments of the First World War. Hemingway's view of male chauvinism is fully attributed to both of them.. They take the war as a kind of masculine trait. Although war, like bullfighting, is the event in which death is eminent, both of them get involved in it as they deem that war and bullfighting are the inner parts of their gender zones. They accept the idea that war is the masculine declaration and that it creates an opportunity for men in which they can launch their manliness. Messent argues that “the relation between masculinity and bullfighting traced there reasserts a traditional sexual politics where masculine values and forms of behavior operate in an exclusive gender zone” (Hemingway, p.95). However, this essay, however, will focus on how the concept of alienation is thematized in the novel.

Moreover, the novel has also been critiqued from a psychoanalytic perspective which focuses on Henry's mental unsettlement at the event of war. For example, the Abruzzi is called a holly place where Henry is expected to go but he shows his inability to go there because he thinks as if his mind was burdened with stress. He loses his inquisitiveness to be interested in divine sensibility. His indecisiveness occurs because of a sort of discernment

that he is taken in, taken in by cruelty. By this term, “taken in” it can be suggested as Messent notes that “Frederic is attracted to the priest’s religious sensibility, but it’s irrelevance to the conditions at hand is suggested by one of Hemingway’s tentative endings for the novel which points to the anachronistic nature of religion in the modern state: I could tell how the priest in our mess lived to be a priest in Italy under Fascism” (Messent, p.105).

Furthermore, Hemingway is also criticized by Debra Modellmorg who argues in her article, “A Queer Sensibility of *A Farewell to Arms*” that Hemingway’s characters reflect a queer sensibility. She argues on the point of ‘queer’ opposite to ‘normal’. Her reading of queer sensibility of the novel explores two kinds of sexual mores. For example, “sex with prostitutes often while drunk, sex outside of marriage, sex in a hospital bed almost surely the woman on top” (9) and the homosexual and lesbian undertones. Significantly, Modellmorg quotes a line from the novel which is supposed to have expressed queer sensibility such as Henry reports “we said to each other that we were married the first day she had come to the hospital and we counted months from our wedding day” (11).

The queer sensibility is also seen in another way. She comments on the friendship of Henry with the priest and Rinaldi. She notes “Renaldi’s suspicion that the priest and Henry are little ‘that way’” (14). In the same way, Catherine has also homo erotic relation with Helen Ferguson. Modellmorg quotes a comment of Miriam Mendel who says, “Helen inhabits every Italian setting in which [Catherine] appears”; indeed, “she seems to be [Catherine’s] constant friend” (15). Modellmorg seems to have emphasized on the lesbian attachment of Helen with Catherine when she [Helen] reacts at Henry’s sudden appearance at the time of their intimate moment in a luxurious hotel in Stressa (15). Notwithstanding this essay will zoom in on the context of alienation caused by the First World War.

2. A NEW HISTORICIST READING OF A FAREWELL TO ARMS

A Farewell to Arms can be explored in the context of alienation and reconstruction of identity according to a New Historicist’s reading. As John suggests, new historicism differs from traditional historicism in its approach to literature. “The focus of new historicist is the relationship between literature and the power relations of the past” (Brannigan, p.178). A traditional historicist believes in the facts which a piece of literary work should reflect while a new historicist focuses on the interpretations of those facts in the literary works. Louis Montrose argues that the “key concern of new historicist critics was ‘the historicity of texts and the textuality of history’. He explains that by ‘the historicity of texts’ he

means that all texts were embedded in specific social and cultural contexts, and by ‘the textuality of history’ he means that all of our knowledge and understanding of the past could only exist through the survival textual traces of the society in question” the very survival of which suggested that they were subject to ‘complex and subtle social processes of preservation and effacement (Wolferys, p.170). According to ‘the historicity of texts’ *A Farewell to arms* is embedded in social and cultural contexts. The social and cultural contexts reveal the power relations in the society. The novel is published in 1929 after the Great World War I. The novel starts with the Italian armies fighting against Austria. The theme of war signifies a kind of power relation in the text since the war functions as one of the major themes. The relationship between the literary and the society becomes further relevant when Booker says, “the new historical methods inspired by the work of thinkers such as Foucault and Geertz produce not only a distinctive style of literary criticism but also a distinctive vision of the relationship between literary and society” (Booker, p.138).

Hemingway relates the story of *A Farewell to Arms* with the contemporary culture he lives in. In the novel, the war-time period influences the people severely and fashions their identities as brave soldiers. The war works as an ‘official power’ over the Italian armies including Frederic Henry. The war imposes strict limitations on fashioning the people of the contemporary time. All men and women are working under the instructions of the war leaders or politicians as if they submit themselves to those war leaders. Greenblatt argues the politicians hold an official power to which all people submit as subjects and, needless to say that Hemingway also fashions himself as a subject to that official power since his characters reflect his own experience. Greenblatt talks about the characters of Renaissance writers and argues that “most of these writers shape identities for themselves within the context of submission to some outside authority: God, a sacred book, church, court, colonial or military administration” (Booker, p.138). As a result, the people who are subjected are alienated from freedom. The Italian armies in *A Farewell to Arms* submit themselves to the official power, colonial or military administration. The soldiers carry out the orders of the colonial or military administration. Henry says, “There are people who would make war. In this country there are many like that. There are other people who would not make war. Henry answers, “They are not organized to stop things and when they get organized their leaders sell them out” (Hemingway, pp.60-61). And the priest tells Henry “I am tired but I have no right to be” (Hemingway, p.58). In this case, it can be said that this power relations between God and human or the king and the subjects or the political leaders and the soldiers or the male and the female or the female and the male energize a subtext of alienation and new identity. My new historicist’s reading also explores an opposite

power relation, alien power in a text. By ‘alien power’ a new historicist means a power which challenges that authoritarian or the official power. Although Henry obeys the war authority or official power in the beginning but, at the end, Henry’s revolts retreating from the war which is his refusal to obey the official power.

Henry’s reaction against the war is the disgust of Hemingway with the bloody war. At the time of Italian retreat, many of the soldiers are sentenced and to save life Henry jumps over the Tagliamento river. He says to Piani and Bonello that “We are in more danger from Italians than Germans” (Hemingway, p.166). Piani calls the Italians ‘the bastards’. Henry leaves the war and leaves it for ever. Henry’s negation of war symbolizes Hemingway’s antiauthoritarian behavior. He wants to create his identity and does not want to be alienated in the war. In *A Farewell to Arms*, war means a time of great crisis and uncertainty in human lives that humans doubt their existence and selves. Henry and Catherine are filled with a notion when they are betrayed by the Italians that serving in the war has actually no meaning. They doubt their selves and existence in the war and seek a new identity of life. The novel is claimed to have juxtaposed the concept of War with the concept of Peace. Both of them influence Henry and Catherine. ‘War’ signifies the authoritarian power while ‘Peace’ signifies the alien power. To be more specific, these ideas of war and peace can be studied in the light of Henry’s involvement with the war and his relationship with Catherine Barkley. In the beginning, Henry’s love for the front and his duty indicates his self-submission to the official power (wartime). He is restless to go back to the front. He says to the doctor, “I can’t wait six months” and the doctor smiled, “you are in such a hurry to get back to the front? The doctor says, “It is very beautiful” and adds, “you are a noble young man” (Hemingway, p.79). But this sense of his duty to war begins to disappear when his love for Catherine Barkley deepens more intensely. In this respect, Catherine stands for that alien power which takes over Henry gradually. Henry again fashions his identity under Catherine and thus, alienates from his self again. Similarly, Catherine is also submissive to Henry. She sleeps at night with Henry in the hospital and makes love with him. Both of them confuse their identities under the silhouette of alienation Henry is afraid of being left alone and desires Catherine to be with him always while Catherine falls apart without Henry.

This chapter will interpret how the identity of Henry and Catherine undergoes a kind of transformation from their former state of submissiveness to the official power (war) into the lovers. The dutiful Henry rejects the front and declares, “I am going to forget the war. I had made a separate peace. I felt damned lonely and was glad when the train got to Stresa” (Hemingway, p.188). The caring nurse, Catherine becomes a caring beloved. Catherine

is like an alien Being who alights on the earth and takes hold of Henry. Hemingway very tactfully presents the idea of these two opposite powers, the official and the alien through the title of the novel, *A Farewell to Arms*. In this case, Hemingway’s use of the word ‘Arms’ may be deconstructed as two opposite power relations in the text. The arms mean the ammunitions and, at the same time, the beloved. The ammunitions stand for official power while the beloved stands for unofficial or alien power. Hemingway threatens to subvert the image of a male political leader as an official authority by installing a female prerogative, that is to say, Catherine Barkley as an alien authority. Henry believes in the state dominated by the male has nothing good, but devastation and this is why he turns back to Catherine. Montrose argues this point from the perspective of Shakespearean plays as he states, “Shakespeare’s play threatens to subvert the powerful image of the Queen as mother of the state by instating male prerogatives, and marks a point of transition in which the iconography of a virgin Queen as head of a patriarchal state begins to become precarious” (Brannigan, p.175). In short, Montrose argues on the subversion of power in an established patriarchal society. War is the accepted cultural ideology of Hemingway’s time depicted in the novel, but he breaks that ideology by introducing a concept of love. His introduction of love, thus, stands in contrast with each other according to the power relations in the text, *A Farewell to Arms*.

3. A MODERN MAN IN WAR AND LOVE

Hemingway proposes two major themes, ‘war and love’ in the novel, *A Farewell to Arms*. War and Love are two dominant cultural forces which signify a state of alienation and reconstruction of identity. This essay will focus on how love appears as an alternative way for the redemption of the mankind from the alienated world of war. In this respect, Hemingway’s presentation of the character, the priest, may be the symbolic presentation of the saint who wants to preach the gospel of Holiness and God. He influences Henry to go to Abruzzi and Henry says, “If it is possible I will return to the Abruzzi” (Hemingway, p.60). Hence, it is clear that Henry wants to have a way to peace leaving the cruel war. Hemingway does never glorify war in this novel, but rather he shows the horrifying pictures of the wartime situations. Henry, Rinaldi, the major and many of the other expose a kind of chivalry or heroic impression upon the war. But, in real, war is nothing glorious and nothing poetic; it just alienates human beings from their traditional belief and customs. When Henry is severely injured by the mortar shell, all of his chivalric notions of war disappear and all he feels physically and mentally is only pain. He realizes that war alienates him from the root of his life in the way the mortar trench shell alienates his body from breath. He says, “I reied to breath

but my breath would not come and I felt myself rush bodily out of myself and out and out and out and all the time bodily in the wind (Hemingway, p.46). Ironically, he is rewarded 'a silver medal of valour' (Hemingway, p.78) as if he won the battle or did a spectacular heroic performance but this reward has nothing to do with Henry's mortal pain.

In addition, the war has no hope and positive sides since it declares war on one another and the victory comes not out of the exchange of love but only through killing and severe damages. Thus, winner celebrates victory and the loser suffers endlessly. Hemingway does irony of this kind of patriotic love of a person for a country. Henry is American by birth, but joins the Italian armies as an ambulance driver. He serves the Italian armies carrying the casualties from the battle and taking to the hospitals. He experiences how the cruelty of war takes away the lives of soldiers giving nothing. Death alienates from life and changes all identities.

War is devoid of life and purity according to the social and cultural text in *A Farewell to Arms*. The military administration sets up two board houses for the officers and the soldiers. All of them indulge to drinking, whoring and killing. Hemingway acknowledges this war as meaningless and futile. Hemingway in his introduction to *Men at War*, he expresses his antipathy for war:

The editor of this anthology...hates war and hates all the politicians whose mismanagement, gullibility, cupidity, selfishness, and ambition brought on this present war and made it inevitable. But once we have a war there is only one thing to do. It must be won. For defeat brings worse things than any that can ever happen in a war. (Hays, p.96).

Hemingway's antipathy for war is also reflected in *A Farewell to Arms* his in which he expresses his antipathy for patriotism and nobility through Henry's experiences. Instead of showing love for patriotism, Hemingway shows rather a solid sympathy for true love. The priest says, "What you tell me about in the nights. That is not love. That is only passion and lust. When you love you wish to do things for. You wish to sacrifice for. You wish to serve" (Hemingway, p.60). Certainly, the priest signifies some possible symptoms of true love. To war with another is no true love, but is just lust and passion for lands and economy. Henry does not realize the priest's words at first, but when he truly falls in love with Catherine, he understands what he wishes for, and sacrifices for. He confesses to himself, "When I first saw her I was in love with her" and adds, "God knows I had not wanted to fall in love with her. I had not wanted to fall in love with anyone" (Hemingway, pp.74-75). It is Catherine, who fills his empty heart with love that she becomes the heart of Henry by herself. War disturbs Henry's mind while love compensates him instead.

'War' gives him wound but 'love' cures him. Now he realizes his love for the front or war is false while Catherine's love is true. He also realizes what the priest

means telling 'to wish', 'to sacrifice' and 'to serve'. In fact, as an ambulance driver, Henry experiences a lot about the bloody war. Henry comes to know from Rinaldi that during his absence in the war, they have no work but "frostbites, chilblains, jaundice, gonorrhoea, self-inflicted wounds, pneumonia and hard and soft chancers" (Hemingway, p.13). Henry sacrifices his duty for Catherine because he wishes to live with Catherine forever; he wants to care and serve in a new peaceful world with Catherine. He wants to re-create his identity and does not want to be lost in dark smoke of war. He is not able to go to Abruzzi for peace but tries to make peace with Catherine in Switzerland. His bidding farewell to Italy is his negation of war and his elopement with Catherine to Switzerland signifies the importance of love in his life. Thus, it can be said that Henry's dreams for a family and love prove how Hemingway views life even in the time of crisis. Both Henry and Catherine's realization of alienation in the war at the end further shapes their identities.

4. THE HISTORICAL CONCEPT OF A MODERN MAN IN THE TEXT

A Farewell to Arms is a story about a man, Lieutenant Frederic Henry. He is a rootless and an alienated man who is American by birth, but joins the Italy during the event of the World War I out of a lonely impulse of delight. Henry represents Hemingway's real life experience of World War I. I will argue that the story of the novel brings forth the idea of alienation through the characterization of Frederic Henry, Catherine Barkley. More specifically, the title of the novel, *A Farewell to Arms* signifies this concept of alienation. As my reading of the novel will show, Frederic Henry is a man who has no family and, moreover, there has no mention of his parents and other family members in the novel. In addition, he has an experience of unbelongingness since he belongs to nowhere. After America enters into the war he joins the Italian army as an ambulance driver. To be perplexed by the violence of World War I, Henry bids farewell to this bloody war and seeks peace and love in the arms of Catherine, who can only provide some relief to him in this modern chaotic life. After some months, he has to bid farewell to his beloved as well. At that time, Henry feels more alienated or, in most cases, an out-cast in the fruitless world. In fact, alienation is a modern philosophy which drives a person into thinking that he is going to a certain direction to where either he has never been before or he is lost. It can also be said that alienation occurs when a person feels easy at no place. Chinua Achebe phrases that "Cultural disintegration involving a sense of alienation from all cultures, being 'no longer at ease' in any cultures, finding a home neither in indigenous tradition nor in Europeanization" (Macguire, p.88). Hogan

states that "Clearly, alienation is not in itself an experience one chooses to have; it is, rather, an inability to enact any choice –an inability, as we shall see, frequently associated with emotional and mental disintegration" (Macguire, p.88). Similarly, Henry's alienation occurs due to his mental and cultural disintegration. The Great War tears him mentally and emotionally and, as a result, he suffers from a severe mental unsettlement. He cannot be able to distinguish between good and bad and, in addition, he is supposed to go to Abruzzi, but upsets the priest telling that "I myself felt badly as he did and could not understand why I had not gone" and he adds, "I had drunk much wine and afterwards coffee and Strega and I explained, winefully, how we did not do the things we wanted to do; we never did such things" (Hemingway, p.14).

The Great War shatters all of his good notions toward life. He does not believe in life has a purpose and a goal, but rather he is embarrassed by thinking so as he himself confesses that "I was always embarrassed by the words sacred, glorious, and sacrifice and the expression in vain. We had heard them, sometimes standing in the rain almost out of earshot, so that only the shouted words came through, and had read them" (Hemingway, p.143). He thinks that these words are illusory and nonsense and saying so he lets the readers know about the present violence and dismissal of virtues or moral values. The analysis will show Henry philosophizing the world that to him, the world is a shadowy place and strange as he says, "I had gone to no such place but to the smoke of cafes and nights when the room whirled and you needed to look at the wall to make it stop, nights in bed, drunk, when you knew that that was all there was, and the strange excitement of waking and not waking who it was with you, and the world all unreal in the dark" (Hemingway, p.14). It means that the world is darkened by the smoke of bombs and ammunitions and, as a consequence, Henry loses the direction in that darkness. In addition, he cannot decide to where he should go and he is alienated from the other parts of the world. This sense of alienation of Henry can be juxtaposed with the idea of a lost generation. Lost generation symbolizes the hollowness or emptiness of human nature. Every man is rendered with some special potentialities which are destroyed by the modern society. In *A Farewell to Arms*, Hemingway portrays this idea of a lost generation; a generation which is seriously affected by the Great Imperialist War.

A generation which is trapped in imperialism and cultural militarism, finally, gets involved in the war of man-hunting. To the political leaders, war is a game and needs to be won, but they never care for that it devastates the peace of the world and astrays the generation. Sir Robert Baden-Powell gives an exquisite example of this kind of game played by the imperialist politicians. Powell remarks, "Football is a good game, but better than it, better than any other game, is that of man-hunting" In a similar way, British society, divided rigidly along

gender lines, believes that "Killing others and dying well and honorably in war inhered in this ethos. War was a cleansing experience" Garnet Wolseley, Britain's most admired soldier, considered war 'the greatest purifier' (Morrow, pp.18-19). Frederic Henry sees that the war has nothing to do with this 'purification' rather it is a game in which shedding blood and capturing countries are the sole object.

Frederic Henry's alienation is more relevant in his behavior. He drinks so much and visits brothel house. He does what his instinct permits him to do. Specifically, an animal has no reason, but instinct which is the life force of it's life while a human has both reason and instinct but a human can restrict his or her instinct by reason. Henry and Catherine live such a life as if they were living like those of animals. War creates a degenerate world, a world which is intolerable and unstable to live in. Henry's living with alcoholism and womanizing signifies his reason is gone and he acts what his instinct says. He steps into the world of animal and his entrance into this world of animal also signifies the death of a human, that is to say, the death of the intellect and rationality. Hemingway ridicules Henry because in the beginning he presents Henry as a masculine, dutiful and sensible officer, but at last, he makes Henry coward and lets him desert from the battle. The war for Henry is a chance to escape from the boredom of life in America to a macho style of living, that is to say, fighting, killing and winning. Before the Great War men have an obsessive interest in knighthood and chivalric life and the people, especially the young men are quite moved by this medieval tradition of knighthood and chivalric war. The Great War makes a way for those young men to fulfill this desire. Morrow says, "The arrival of war in august 1914 would release young men from the constraints of a dull, materialistic society to find their escape and fulfillment in the grandest enterprise of all" (Morrow, p.19) Hemingway ridicules this sense of fulfillment in the grandest enterprise through Henry. Henry may be interested in this chivalrous notion of war and his sudden encounter with Catherine Barkley reminds the reader of the scene when a knight meets a beautiful woman at the time of wandering into the forest. Like Henry, Catherine is also disintegrated and alienated person. She is also disillusioned by the war in which she loses her fiancé who is killed on the Somme. Catherine is a British nurse, but works in a hospital in Italy as a V.A.D. She is also disillusioned after her fiancé is killed and from then on she begins to lose her own self. With Henry she gets involved in an illusion of love with him. She is dismissive to Henry's advances at first but responds to him later. She knows that both of them play a game with each other in the name of love. Henry thinks that she is completely broken when she tells him, "Oh, darling, you will be good to me, won't you? Because we're going to have a strange life" (Hemingway, p.25).

In real, Both Henry and Catherine know what they are

doing is strange but is also correct because the world itself becomes a strange place to live in. Gajdusek in his article *the psychodynamics of integrity* considers their affair as “a hysterical mode of excitement”. Initially, they are not committed to each other; they just satisfy their physical need. Gajdusek in his same article argues that “Catherine is well aware of her willingness to use the illusion of love and Frederic is opportunistically willing to use her masturbatory need as a means to his own real sexual fulfillment”. On second thought, this is a kind of mutual understanding that this couple develops. Catherine’s fiancé is dead and, now, she needs a new lover to forget his dead fiancé. On the other hand, Henry is sex starved. Both of them can understand their need for each other. Therefore, they start playing with each other. Catherine feels alienation in deep inside her heart, even if Henry leaves her even for a day. Once, Henry is away for three days, but she thinks that she does not see him for a long time. This means that she is also rootless like Henry and she has nobody in her life without him. She asks Henry

“Where have you been?”

I’ve been on the post.

You couldn’t have sent me a note?

No, said. Not very well. I thought I was coming back.

You ought to have let me know, darling” (AFA, p.27)

She adds,

“You’ve been away for a long time.

This is the third day. But I’m back now”

Through this conversation, it is assumed that they have a marital relationship, but in real, their relationship is non-marital and illegitimate. Their sudden meeting with each other, having pre-marital physical relationship and Catherine’s giving birth to a stillborn son signify madness. Their madness does not occur out of mental disorder rather it originates from the disintegrated culture in which the families as well as the societies come under the pressure of the Great War. The illegitimate relationship between Catherine and Henry symbolizes the illegitimacy of that alien culture brought by the ruling class of that time. The sudden appearance of this alien culture shatters all hope and creates war that splits family, human relationship, traditional belief and culture. It is proven in the lives of Henry and Catherine; their affair rests on kissing, dating and lying to each other. Henry talks to himself, “I knew I did not love Catherine Barkley nor had any idea of loving her.

This was a game, like bridge, in which you said things instead of playing cards. Like bridge, you had to pretend you were playing for money or playing for some stakes. Nobody had mentioned what the stakes were. It was all right with me”. He adds, “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 brother

officers” (Hemingway, p.27-28). Catherine is Henry’s change of taste and vice-versa. Their relationship lacks permanence and can crack any time. The impermanence of their relationship signals to coming alienation of both of them. They are gambling with each other’s lives in which there are risking their lives and creating uncertainty. They love each other until their sexual excitement fades and this is proved when Catherine says to Henry that “I am awfully tired” (Hemingway, p.29). Catherine’s use of the word, ‘tired’ is significant. She is tired of false love of Henry, Henry is tired of the harlots and the whole generation is tired of the bloody war. Henry’s false love to Catherine indicates the Imperialists’ false motive’ to war. Although the Imperialists value and glorify the war, Morrow suggests that “The First World War may seem senseless; it was and is so only for those who refuse the reality of the era prior to 1914. It was beautiful only for the wealthy, and only in retrospect. It was, in fact, riven with instability and tension, both domestic and international” (Morrow, p.35).

Catherine’s enter into Henry’s ‘false love’ indicates people’s enter into the ‘false motive’ of war since they have no choice but choosing this. In this respect, Catherine’s condition may resemble the nervous condition of this war generation. She is trapped naturally in Henry’s sneaky tricks and the generation is similarly trapped by the sneaky tricks by the Imperialist politicians. For Catherine, “And you play it as well as you know how. But it’s a rotten game” (Hemingway, p.28). Hemingway portrays, in fact, a world of alienation where human is not only alienated but also his or her ideologies get alienated. For example, Catherine has her own ideology because she does not allow her fiancé to have sex with before marriage. She is virgin and waits for marriage but she is shocked at the sudden death of her fiancé. She mourns over the fact that she cannot give what her fiancé wants from her. She says to Henry, “I was a fool not to. I could have given him that anyway. But I thought it would be bad for him” (Hemingway, p.19). Then, her ideology is gone and she makes a physical relationship with Henry lest she should lose him like her former lover. She lives with him in the hospital, in a hotel in Milan. She feels like a whore in the hotel as she confesses, “I never felt like a whore before” (Hemingway, p.120).

Hence, her previous social position as a virgin woman can be contrasted with her present social position like a whore. It is a kind of strange sensibility and behavior how an unblemished woman behaves like a whore. Moreover, Catherine’s desire to do something sinful indicates loss of her purity. She thinks her illegitimate sexuality with Henry is innocent and wants to something sinful. The readers can wonder if her elicit sexuality is not sinful, then, which deed she considers sinful in her sight. She asserts, “I wish we could do something really sinful. Everything we do seems so innocent and simple. I can’t believe we do anything wrong” (Hemingway, p.121). Catherine’s

deconstruction of ‘innocence’ and ‘sin’ results in the cultural and political unrest in war-time world. Henry’s distraction from Abruzzi and interest in alcoholism is the symbolic presentation of contemporary alienated culture which is devoid of brotherhood and fraternity and indulges to cruelty and massacre.

To covet more lands, all of the European Imperialists declare war on one another, that is to say, they make a massive declaration of cruelty. The cruelty destructs everything, destructs, all utterly. It also destructs the armies who are like the ants crawling into a bamboo and when the bamboo is burnt, there is no escape except they must die. Similarly, Henry has no way out to escape, but to remain in this world of alienation. His runaway from the battle with Catherine is not only an escape from the mad world of war but also an escape from alienation. Since alienation is universal, there is no option to avoid it. Henry takes Catherine to Switzerland to create a family with her, but he is further alienated by her death. It can be asked why Catherine dies in a hospital in Switzerland because the war is in Italy not in Switzerland. The answer is that Hemingway no more believes in paradise in this earth rather he believes in the world of ‘*The Waste Land*’ by T.S. Eliot. Baker says, “the happiness of the Garden that a man must lose”. Furthermore, it is said that in Hemingway’s literary imagination, these attempts to recover paradise take two basic forms. “The first occurs away from civilization, in the outdoors, where men might discover that ‘all mean egotism vanishes’ and experience a transcendental oneness with the universe.

The second way of attaining prelapsarian bliss is by establishing (ideally, in a natural setting) a complementary union with a member of the opposite sex. The search for such a relationship runs throughout Hemingway’s fiction. A man finds his ideal woman, and together they flee from civilization into some pastoral retreat where they are united through their love against the rest of the world” (Donaldson, p.175). But Hemingway’s style of breaking the union of his hero and heroine at the end signifies that the world cannot be paradise forever, rather it can be glimpsed for a moment. Hemingway’s denial of paradise finally signifies his philosophy of denial. Both of their love game is an escape into the paradise as “she is establishing the ethical terms for a relationship that will become their private retreat from a deceptive, lawless world” (Hemingway, p.181).

5. THE MODERN MAN SYMBOLIZED IN THE HEMINGWAY CODE

Hemingway’s concept of alienation deconstructs and reconstructs his hero’s identity. His hero is very typical, fragmented, rootless, and impractical. Critics name him the Hemingway code hero. By the term, ‘code hero’ the critics claim that Hemingway’s hero lives a life which

is extremely sinful and nasty. His hero is naturally male like Hemingway himself. In addition, Hemingway’s own experience of life is reflected in his hero. In *A Farewell to Arms*, Lieutenant Frederic Henry is, in most cases, resembles Hemingway. Like Hemingway, Henry is wounded in the war. He is a macho man, alcoholic and goes from one woman to another one. He is not a lover, but a sex starved man. He is absolutely irreligious and empty inside. In the novel, he enjoys the priest baiting which metaphorically stands for the death of religion or morality. He creates a personal identity for him, which is alienated from a general human identity. The gospel of the priest influences him in no way because he is an existentialist who believes in that there are no prior ideas and values created by God but it is man who creates values and ideals. According to this concept, war is man’s idea and to kill enemies and covet lands are also of man’s idea. In *A Farewell to Arms*, Henry is a masculine and an adventurous man who indulges in liquor, woman severely. He is a man who is more individual, skeptical, and rough. He is confused about his national identity. Rinaldi tells Henry, “You are really an Italian. All fire and smoke and nothing inside. You only pretend to be American. We are brothers and we love each other” (Hemingway, p.56).

The Great War shakes the spirit of the American dream and turn it’s optimism into cynicism. This is why Hemingway’s code hero has no faith in optimism and believes in life will remain meaningless continually. Rinaldi speaks the truth that their inside is full of smoke, fire and not of hope and life force. In fact, Rinaldi exemplifies the idea of Hemingway code. For Henry, if this meaningless life is to go on, it is easier to live on whoring, drinking and ridiculing. He is a self-made alienated person who believes that “If people bring so much courage to this world the world has to kill them to break them, so of course it kills them” (Hemingway, p.193). He thinks that he is lost somewhere and where he is lost, he does not know. He says to Rinaldi “No. I haven’t been anywhere” (Hemingway, p.131). He feels like hell in the war and suffers from a kind of homelessness. Alcohol and illegitimate sexuality that threaten syphilis and inevitable death are the only form of diversion distracting him from the violence of war. This is the code, the code which makes the way to degeneration and alienation. The code which also signifies that there are no more good causes left to live for.

6. THE ENDAEVOR TO RECONSTRUCT THE GENDER

Hemingway’s gender is a hotly debated issue in the literary world. Naturally, his hero is typically alienated person and maintains a stereotypical notion of masculinity. It can be argued that he thinks he is manly and muscularly strong. His manly behavior indicates a sort of typical

inferiority of woman. Hemingway's hero is also known as sadist. They get pleasure inflicting pain on others. In short, Hemingway's world is the world of masculinity. Messent says, "Masculinity is a term generally used to refer to the set of images, values, interests, and activities held important to a successful achievement of male adulthood....it remains consistently opposed to the 'feminine' those characteristics that must be discarded in order to actualize masculinity" (Messent, p.86). Therefore, Hemingway uses the idea of his own masculine codes as a tool of expressing his hero like Frederic Henry. It is said that his *New Yorker* performance and some public displays make "Papa Hemingway" which is "synonymous with a stereotypical notion of masculinity" and he is also accused of "male chauvinism hangs over the man and his work" (Donaldson, p.170). My essay will focus on the identity of Henry and Catherine energized by alienation. Hemingway presents an idea that this world is the world of masculinity which shakes the normal balance between man and woman. It is this idea of masculinity which creates the war, drills the military power and indicates the superiority of masculine. The prostitution or the bawdy house in the novel is nothing but a symbolic representation of this masculine world. Some critics argue that the masculinity is the power which patriarchal society imposes upon the women.

This power is symbolized by the 'male genitalia' which is superior to the 'female nothing'. Hemingway's attitude toward woman is severely criticized as he propounds them in his works as a man's possession. For example, Catherine Barkley in *A Farewell to Arms* is presented as a dependent and weak woman who has nowhere to go but to accept Frederic Henry. She is in a vulnerable condition after her fiancé is killed in the war. Her hasty involvement with Henry after her fiancé signifies a woman's frailty and triviality without man. In fact, Hemingway's woman is marginalized and feels an inner vacancy since she has a 'lack'. In 1940 Edmund Wilson who is an admirer of Hemingway criticizes Hemingway's "growing antagonism" to women (Donaldson, p.170). Moreover, some critics declare "Hemingway could not depict women or that he was better at depicting men without women and critics divide his fictional women into either castrators or love-slaves, either 'bitches' or helpmates-the simplicity of the dichotomy presumably mirroring Hemingway's own sexist mind-set" (Donaldson, p.171). This idea of 'love slaves' or 'bitches' can be compared to Henry's initial attempt to 'seduce' Catherine. Henry's initial attempt to seduce Catherine undoubtedly expresses his right to her. This typical male attitude to female can be seen in the historical context of a text. The Great War is a history, the history of men when Europe is divided into "two alliances: the Triple Alliance of Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Italy and the Dual Alliance of France and Russia formed in 1894" (Morrow, p.11). The soldiers are drilled mentally and physically strong. All of the European

countries exercise military power and strength.

Hemingway's intension of writing on men comes from this male tradition of contemporary time of war and he addresses that "the world of writing should be a man's world, a boxing gym, no woman allowed" (Donaldson, p.170). In this case, Frederic Henry can be a good example of this man's world. His uniform is not only the symbol of military power, but also a symbol of self-defined manliness. By his military uniform Hemingway focuses on the colonial culture of the masculine world. Henry is the picture of a new male emerged in America before the Great War. The American so-called man is challenged by the modern woman of America. The male authority is doubted and begins to lose its power over female. They have no option to prove their manhood and power. Messent says, in this respect, "American entry into the war appeared to offer American men a solution to 'the crisis of their sex role' a proving ground for masculinity and a test of strength and courage in vigorous action" (Messent, p.86). Henry's joining the Italian army gives him an opportunity to prove his manliness. But his manliness is further complicated. Henry in *A Farewell to Arms* dominates Catherine but his excessive indulgence to Catherine questions his manhood again. Sexually, women become more powerful than man because it is Catherine, who distracts Henry from war and sustains her power over him. Henry's power as a masculine begins to diminish when he passes more nights with Catherine than in the mess as if she engulfed him completely. Hemingway's concept of masculinity is always confronted with the threat from the female side on the issue of 'dependence'.

Henry's initial approach to Catherine is, no doubt, seductive and dominating, but afterwards, his excess association with her threatens his masculinity. In the hospital, Henry has another gesture, not as a stereotypical male, but as a helpless and care-seeker man just like a child seeking mother care. He asks Miss Gage, "Don't you know when the other nurses are coming?" (Hemingway, p.70). Actually, he wants to know if Catherine will come. His sense of superiority is gone when he shows his complete dependence on Catherine. He asserts, "I'm crazy about you. I'm mad about you. Come on, please. Come on, please, please, please" (Hemingway, p.74). Therefore, Hemingway's portrayal of masculinity is uncertain in its social and cultural context. Although the text deals with the Great War, the actual war takes place between the sexes regarding 'superiority'. Truly, Hemingway confuses traditional gender role and masculinity in this novel. For example, Henry says to Catherine that she is brave, but Catherine denies this and says that she wants to be brave. In this way, Hemingway contradicts the idea of stereotypical male tradition. To be more frank, Hemingway is more in conflict with the socio-cultural concept and construction of gender. To support this, it may be said that Henry's masculinity is not given naturally rather it is made socially. His being in love with Catherine

and his dependence on her is his revolt against this social construction. He leaves his masculine attitude and goes for Catherine not to possess her, but to seek some love from her. He balances his position equal to her. Probably, Henry is not comfortable with his cultural construction of masculine identity or he may want to avoid being a stereotypical male. He is tired of the war and alcohol and wants to retreat from this sort of life. He takes Catherine as his life partner and changes his identity from 'masculine' to a 'lover'.

Messsent says, “The inversion of sexual roles in Hemingway’s fiction, the uncertainty of his male protagonists’ sense of their own manhood, and the divided and contradictory nature of his discourse of sexuality and gender are all markers of a deep concern about masculine identity which are under acute threat” (Messent, p.87). Furthermore, Henry’s putting off the military uniform and putting on the civil dress indicates his fall from the phallic position into the female nothing. He says, “Knotting my tie and looking in the glass I looked strange to myself in the civilian clothes” (Hemingway, p.199). In addition, Henry says to Catherine, “You are brave” that means he is no more courageous and it seems that he loses his phallic authority over her and when she retorts that “No. But I hope to be” which indicates the spirit of ‘new woman’ in her. A ‘new woman’ is a new kind of woman emerged in 1920 in America. This new woman is a young and tomboyish in appearance; she wears short skirts, smokes, drinks, plays golf, dances, she has short hair. Catherine’s wish to cut her hair signifies this new woman; free and strong. She does not mean to be a man cutting her hair, but to redefine her traditional feminine identity.

In a similar way, her wish to let Henry grow his ‘beard’ also signifies the re-definition of his masculine identity. It is Henry, who agrees “It’s a good idea. It will give me something to do” (Hemingway, p.229). Here Henry is merged in Catherine. Catherine teases him, telling “Othello with his occupation gone” (AFA, p.198). My reading of the novel will show how Hemingway lets Henry be alienated from his stereotypical idea of masculinity and adopt femininity at the end. As Judith Butler argues that the identity is not determined by the physical shape of a person, but rather by his or her performance. Henry exposes his stoic masculinity in the beginning, but gradually intends to be more feminine in his behavior. In a similar way, Catherine becomes masculine though she is inferior to Henry at the beginning. To speak with Butler that “the gendered body is performative suggests that it has no ontological status apart from the various acts which constitutes its reality” (Butler, p.173). Thus, various acts of Henry create his various identities and, in the same way, various acts of Catherine create her various identities. Henry in war is different than Henry out of the war and Catherine before meeting Henry is different than Catherine after meeting Henry. Both of them play with their identities. Henry’s flirt with Catherine is his

masculine toy in blood (by the term, ‘masculine toy’ it can be argued that to take a woman as a sexual object and leave her when sexual thirst is satisfied) but gradually he falls in love with her and worships her which is uncharacteristic of his stereotypical masculine behavior. In this way, the novel presents two kinds of male and female identities. Henry’s character can be seen as original and also as the parodied version of his masculinity.

Parodied version means that in the beginning, he presents himself as a robust man, but at the end, he becomes the feminine ‘other’ by himself. His ‘male genitalia’ is transformed into the ‘female nothing’. Butler says, “The loss of the sense of ‘the normal’, however, can be it’s own occasion for laughter, especially when ‘the normal’, ‘the original’ is revealed to be a copy, and an inevitably failed one, an ideal that no one can embody” (Butler, p.176). He fails to maintain his stoic masculine behavior at the end as he becomes feminized that means the parodied version of his masculine identity. For example, Henry’s initial attempt to seduce Catherine signifies the idea of the commodification of the masculine world, but later when Henry realizes that he really needs her, it reminds the reader that she is no more a commodity to him rather she is an important part of his life. Henry prays “God, please don’t make her die. You took the baby but don’t let her die” (Hemingway, p.254). Thus, his dependence on Catherine indicates loss of his normal masculine identity and he behaves like anti- normal, that is, feminine. Actually Henry’s anti-normal behavior is opposite to the traditional sadist male of America. The sadist man is an active man while the masochist is passive. Henry’s sadistic behavior to Catherine disappears when he receives endless pain at the death of her. He turns into a masochist receiving a lot of pain from Catherine, who is now the torturer and Henry the tortured. Wyndham Lewis in his work, *Machismo and Masochism* says, “Frederic Henry in *A Farewell to Arms* represents the passive voice ‘of those to whom things are done’ in contrast to those who have executive will and intelligence” (Fantina, p.22). In fact, the war creates a sense of alienation in both Henry and Catherine and this alienation results in a loss of self and further complicates their sense of identity.

CONCLUSION

To conclude the idea, *A Farewell to Arms* ends with separation of Henry from Catherine. Hemingway’s style of such ending has a lot to do with his time. Catherine’s death shapes Henry’s real identity; the identity that best matches him and the identity which is permanent and solid. Henry becomes the loneliest person in the world at the end and finally he realizes ‘to be lonely’ is the remaining identity in this degenerate world. A man’s becoming masculine or a woman’s becoming feminine is just a pose. He knows the truth that an alienated person like him cannot have any other identity except being

lonely. The last line of Henry arouses sympathy in the audience, "After a while I went out and left the hospital and walked back to the hotel in the rain" (Hemingway, p.256). This idea of alienation and the reconstruction of a person's identity are dominant in Hemingway's novel, *A Farewell to Arms*. This loss of root and self is the socio-cultural phenomenon that prevails in the contemporary time. Montrose says, "The focus of such work has been upon a refiguring of the socio-cultural field within which canonical Renaissance literary and dramatic works were originally produced; upon resituating them not only in relationship to other genres and modes of discourse but also in relationship to contemporaneous social institutions and non-discursive practices" (Rivkin, p.779).

The new historicist's reading of *A Farewell to Arms* explores a socio-cultural text behind the history of the Great War. Hemingway presents the most debatable issue of gender after America enters into the war. The American dream's optimism is questioned by the Great War I, which brings economic crisis and alienation in human lives. The novel's protagonists, Lieutenant Frederic Henry and Catherine Barkley seem to fight with their culturally alienated identities, that is to say, who they are. America's involvement in the war breaks the all relationships and families. The war brings in America 'cynicism' instead of hope. Henry's bidding farewell to Catherine signifies this alienation which is the typical cynicism in the contemporary American. Henry's attempt to make a neutral family with Catherine is denied due to the destruction of the family values in the America. Hemingway gives an outstanding example of alienation through George, a character in this novel, who tells Henry when he wants some from him, "That's all right, Tenate'. I know how it is. I know how a man gets short" (Hemingway, p.89). By this word, 'short', Hemingway signifies a person's getting 'short' in modern time.

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