

Aspects of Modernism in Ernest Hemingway's "A Farewell to Arms"

Khaleel Bakheet Khaleel Ismail

Department of English Language, Prince Sattam bin Abdulazeez University, KSA, and Department of English, University of Dalanj, Sudan

Abstract

This paper examines how Ernest Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms* mirrors life and existence under the umbrella term - modernism. This is achieved by carefully exploring the tenets of the term modernism and various arguments of various scholars especially as it relates to Literature. Attempt is therefore made to situate *A Farewell to Arms* within this movement, focusing on the life of Hemingway and how it bears great influence on the novel, his characters, thematic import and his deployment of style and language. The paper uses New Historicism as a framework to exploring issues of modernism that Hemingway mirrors in the novel.

Keywords: Modernism; Ernest Hemingway; Elements of modernism in literature.



CC BY: [Creative Commons Attribution License 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

1. Background

Over the years, every phase or era of human civilization is characterized by dominant mindset that guides way of life and human knowledge as well as the way the world is perceived. The great advancement in technology as well as industrialization and globalization coupled with the experiences of World War I [WWI] that typifies the later part of the 19th century, stretching to the early 20th century largely shaped human consciousness and the world view of this time. This change found its way to all human enterprise –politics, religion, economy and as usual, literature. American literary writers like Gertrude Stein, William Faulkner, T.S .Eliot, Ezra Pounds E. E. Cummings and Ernest Hemingway who had moved from America to Europe and experienced these changes started depicting the human conditions of this period in their literary production. According to [Lathbury \(2006\)](#) "Whatever the instrument—poem, novel, canvas, play—the music to be heard was new. That, after all, was Pound's fundamental imperative: 'Make it new.' Rejecting their immediate cultural inheritance as barren and unworkable."

According to [Spender \(1963\)](#) "human nature has changed and so also human relationship and the way in which writers depict the realities of existence." The chaos despair and hopelessness that faced the modern man in this era removed him from the conventional or classical notion of life. There is a deliberate attempt to disconnect from the romantic view of life to reality that has come to bare in this age. It is this perception of life generally that gave birth to modernism.

2. Theoretical Framework

The choice of new historicism as the frame work for this paper is informed by how a personal experience of Hemingway in World War I bears significant influence on *A Farewell to Arms*. Having its root around the 1979 to 1980 in the essays of Stephen Greenblatt, Louis Montrose and Jonathan Dollimore, New Historicism is more of an American term for Cultural Poetics in Britain. The assumption here stems from the argument that both the writer and the critic are influenced by the culture of the society. [Bressler \(2003\)](#) is of the view that:

Cultural poetics begin by challenging the long held belief that a text is an autonomous work of art that contains all elements necessary to arrive at a supposedly correct interpretation...

Unlike the old historicism, the New Historicism asserts that an intricate connection exists between an aesthetic object – a text or any work of art and society, while denying that a text can be evaluated in isolation from its cultural context.

There is every sense in which the personality of Hemingway and the prevalent world view of the modernist find expression in *A Farewell to Arms*. Irrespective of the fact that several other literary theories like feminism (from the angle of Catherine) structuralism, formalism could be applied to the novel to deduce interpretation, New Historicism will suffice for this paper. According to [Montrose \(1989\)](#) "...the possibilities and pattern for actions are always socially and historically situated..." This of course is a stand that [Ker \(2004\)](#) justifies thus: "The writer is a member of a society and his sensibility is conditioned by social and political happenings around him." In the light of this symbiosis between and history [Wa Thiongo \(1981\)](#) put it thus: "The writer as a human being is himself a product of history, of time and place...A writer's subject matter is history." It is on this backdrop that attempt shall be made to look at modernism in Ernest Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms* from the window of New Historicism.

3. Modernism

Modernism has its root in the late 19th and early 20th centuries mainly in Europe and North America. For many of us, the definition of the word 'modern' in terms of literary history almost automatically suggests the term "modernism." [Clerk \(2007\)](#) argues that "high incomes profoundly shape lifestyles in the modern developed world. But wealth has not brought happiness." When it comes to modernism in Literature, certain names quickly hurries to

the mind. We naturally get curious to see Ezra Pounds, T. S. Eliot, E.E Cummings, Amy Lowell, F. Scott Fitzgerald and Ernest Hemingway. As it relates to Literature, the movement majorly concerns itself with a conscious break from the traditions and styles of poetry and fiction as obtainable in the classical era. In this regard, Spender (1963) argues thus:

There is art which is modern, different from several movements grouped approximately under the heading 'modernism'. Modern art is that in which the artist reflects awareness of an unprecedented modern situation in its form and idiom. The quality of which is called modern shows in the realized sensibility of style and form more than in the subject matter.

In the light of their break from the classical world view, Abram (1999) opines that modernism to critics involves “a deliberate and radical break with some of the traditional bases not only of Western art, but of Western culture in general.” However, it is pertinent to establish the fact that modernism in itself is an umbrella or omnibus term for many other related movement of this era. For instance we have expression in which artist sought to express meaning or emotional experience rather than physical reality, existentialism that has to do with the meaning or worth of life as we live it. We equally have absurdism, a philosophy based on the belief that the universe is irrational and meaningless. Others include individualism, futurism, surrealism and vorticism. All these literary movement finds expression under the larger term of modernism. What is important according to Bressler (2003) is that writers under modernism “wishes to break from the past and seemingly disavow cultural influences in a work of literature.”

4. Elements of Modernism in Literature

According to Beasley (2007), “Not only was modernist literature appropriately difficult, it was also morally serious. For a new generation of academics and critics in both Britain and the United States, Eliot’s poetry and criticism provided a means to analyze and criticize the direction of modern culture.” Farley (2013) argues that “modernism in America literature was greatly inspired by the avant-garde trends in art.” There is general demand for a ‘new form’ for both poetry and the novel. One of the basic elements of modernism in American literature is destruction. Resulting from the World War I[ww1] in which massive destruction of lives and properties became dominant. Earnest Hemingway captures this in *A Farewell to Arms*. This sense of destroyed essence of life as applied to literary writing, resulting to distorted language. This is to enable them capture the ‘nihilistic disorder beyond the ordered surface of life and existence. In Scott Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby* he deliberately breaks the rules of syntax and structure. William Faulkner invents new words and adopts first person narrative in *The Sound and the Fury*.

We are equally confronted with fragmentation in there plot, images and narrative form. *The Waste Land* by T.S. Eliot for instance captures the waste land of destroyed cities. The stanzas and sentences are broken in ‘The waste land’ Eliot declares ‘These fragments have shored against my ruins’ (line 430). Such themes as death, disillusionment, sexuality, muscularity and meaninglessness of life and general disbelief in the existence of God runs through the works of the modernists. In support of this fragmented nature of life and existence, Spender (1963) calls it distortion which according to him is much more obviously an element in modern visual art than in literature. Spender further highlights other tenets of modernism to include; “Realization which leads to determination to invent new style in other to express the deeply felt change in the modern world.” Art for him at this stage “transforms reality into shared inner life.” Modernists according to Spender (1963) “seeks the alternative life of art...using art to interpret the external materialism into the language of the inner life.” This according to him further justifies arguments of the surrealist who use poetry as a technique for inducing states of mind supposedly supper-real.

It is pertinent to note that a part from American literature, we equally find writers from other parts of the world representing the ideas of this age in there writing. In USSR for instance Solzhenitsyn Alexander wrote *One Day in the Life of Ivan Danisovich* representing the modern life as a prison, Franz Kafka in Germany questions the notion of innocence and loss of confidence in existence of justice in *The Trial*. George Orwell published *Nineteen Eighty Four* in 1948 and lots more. Poets also responded to this new found notion of writing in their poetry. William Butler Yeats of Ireland published *Selected Poetry*. Very absurd Ted Hughes published *Crow* with major thematic import breaking totally from the classical believe of the existence of God. One thing is paramount here, that typical of literary venture, all forms responded swiftly to the life and realities that life presents in this epoch. It is on this background knowledge that this paper will rely in exploring Ernest Hemingway’s *A Farewell to Arms* in relation to modernism.

5. Earnest Hemingway

According to a publication in *The Ernest Hemingway Primer* by Timeless (2009), Ernest Miller Hemingway was born on July 21, 1899 in Oak Park, Illinois to Dr. Clarence Edmonds Hemingway and Grace Hall Hemingway. The second of six children, Ernest enjoyed an adventurous boyhood, fishing and hunting with his father in the northern woods of Michigan. He attended Oak Park High School where he excelled in his classes, particularly English. He tried his hand at football and swimming, edited the school paper (the Trapeze), and contributed pieces to the school’s literary magazine (the Tabula). After graduating high school, Ernest traveled to Kansas City and worked as a cub reporter for The Kansas City Star. In 1918, he began service as an ambulance driver for the Italian army. On July 8, he was wounded at Fossalta on the Italian Piave while delivering chocolates, cigarettes, and postcards to soldiers. He married Elizabeth Hadley Richardson on September 3, 1921. The newlyweds soon entered the literary community of Paris, living off of Hadley’s trust fund and Ernest’s pay as a foreign correspondent for the Toronto Star. The 1920’s were extremely productive writing years for Hemingway. *Three Stories and Ten Poems* was published in 1923, *In Our Time* in 1925. In 1926, *The Torrents of Spring* and the widely successful novel, *The Sun*

Also Rises were published. A collection of short stories titled *Men without Women* followed in 1927. This year also signified the end of Hemingway's marriage to Hadley and his subsequent marriage to Pauline Pfeiffer on May 10, 1927.

On December 6, 1928, Hemingway was dealt a devastating emotional blow as his father, suffering from severe diabetes and concerned about his financial future, shot himself. Hemingway continued to write producing what many critics still feel is the best novel ever written about World War I. *A Farewell to Arms* was published in 1929 and solidified Hemingway's reputation as one of the greatest writers of his generation. The 1930's would see the publication of Hemingway's bible on bullfighting, *Death in the Afternoon* (1932), a recount of his African safari in *Green Hills of Africa* (1935) and two famous short stories, "The Snows of Kilimanjaro" (1936) and "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber" (1936).

In the late 1930's, Hemingway ventured to Spain to give his encouragement to the Loyalists fighting in the Spanish Civil War. His experiences as a war correspondent for the North American Newspaper Alliance would inspire his other Great War novel, *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. Exactly one month after the 1940 publication of *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, Hemingway married fellow writer and war correspondent Martha Ellis Gellhorn. It was a marriage that would last only five years. He married fourth and final wife Mary Welsh Monks on March 14, 1946. For the next fourteen years, the couple would live in Cuba. A few of Ernest Hemingway's contemporaries had theories as to why the great author was so prone to walking down the aisle. F. Scott Fitzgerald felt that Hemingway needed a new woman for every big book.

After a disappointing reception of his 1950 novel, *Across the River and into the Trees*, Hemingway rallied producing *The Old Man and the Sea* (1952), a short work that earned him a 1953 Pulitzer Prize and ultimately the 1954 Nobel Prize for Literature. He further published a few more novels and short stories. Physically unnerved from two plane crashes earlier that year, Hemingway was unable to attend the prize ceremonies. He would live another seven years. On July 2, 1961, in his home in Ketchum, Idaho, Hemingway died of a self-inflicted shotgun wound to the head. His wife Mary found him and relayed word of her husband's death to the world. Ernest Hemingway was two and a half weeks shy of his sixty-second birthday. Three sons and millions of loyal readers would preserve his memory. The knowledge of his personality above would form basis for understanding his world view and by extension his writings. It is on this background of his life and the socio economic, historical and political circumstances that dominate his society of the modern era that this paper will rely in exploring one of his most celebrated novel that lay key commentary on the experiences of World War I (WWI)-*A Farewell to Arms*.

6. On a Farewell to Arms

Published in 1929, Ernest Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms* is a novel that draws source from the personal experiences of Hemingway who served in the Italian Army as a Red Cross ambulance driver during World War I, got wounded, and spent time in an American Army in Milan, where he met a nurse. According to [Hering \(2010\)](#) over the twenty years before the Great War, confidence in traditional beliefs and expectations gradually eroded under questions about the sanctity of religion, the efficacy of science, and the cultural isolationism of the United States of America. Increasingly, change seemed necessary; the old needed to give way to the new. Though *A Farewell to Arms* begins in 1916, Hemingway didn't get to Italy until the summer of 1918. The Italian retreat from Caporetto, described in such detailed in the novel, began in October 1917. *A Farewell to Arms* uses a technique which is purely subjective, and a style which is articulate entirely in its bones and not at all in its flesh. Thus, when compared to literature of the 1920s, Hemingway was a master in capturing the essence of the story and eliminating nonessential elements often employed by less talented writers.

7. Setting

Set in various locations in Italy and Switzerland; late summer 1916 through spring 1918, we are given specific place names, and specific events, and even days of the week, but we must go outside the text to get the years. Luckily, Ernest Hemingway is accurate, right down to the weather (which is incredibly important to the story), and it doesn't take too much research to pin things down. When we read that Catherine's fiancé died the year before, we can look up the Battle of Somme and learn that it must be 1917. When we read about the Italian retreat from Caporetto, we can look it up and confirm that it's 1917.

Consequently, typical of the modernist writers, the hazy temporal setting is disorienting, especially when we read the novel decades after World War I. Italy in World War I is a fractured and broken landscape which mirrors the tragic and breaking lives of the characters. The only safe places are bedrooms, bars, and hospitals, and even the seemingly safest settings in the novel are suffused with fragility. Safe places are also places to break down. Hospitals are also places to die. Bedrooms can be the loneliest places on earth. The frailty of setting which sets the stage for larger depiction of the frailty of human existence as found in *A Farewell to Arms* is magnified when Frederic and Catherine get to Switzerland. They've finessed their way in and everything is almost too good to be true. And it is. The rain that's been haunting them throughout the novel finally catches up to them and everything gets more broken than we imagined. This mirrors the disbelief that many encountered when faced with the reality of World War I, both during and after. Through the novel's settings Hemingway expresses that sense of disbelief, and the extreme sense of frailty that accompanies it.

8. Plot

A Farewell to Arms is narrated by an American man driving ambulances for the Red Cross in Italy during World War I. We don't get his full name until Book Two of the novel. During Book One he's known as Mr. Henry, or "Tenente" (Lieutenant). We don't even know the narrator's name until after he gets wounded. And the people around him are as puzzled as we are about what an American is doing driving Red Cross ambulances for the Italian army. The facts trickle out over many chapters, and the initial situation is one of getting to know Frederic Henry. We are therefore confronted with the Conflict Love and war which are dangerous combination. When Catherine and Frederic meet, she falls in love instantly, but he thinks that love is the last thing he needs. Anybody can die at any moment, but, in the middle of a war, death weighs heavy on the scales of chance. So who wants to fall in love?

Complication sets in when Catherine became pregnant. Catherine is pregnant and Frederic has to go back to the front in three weeks. In the meantime, they plan a little vacation. Unfortunately, Miss Van Campen thinks that a liquor bottle shaped like a bear is evidence that his jaundice is self-inflicted. When he defends himself by talking about his "groin," he gets his butt sent immediately back to the front, not knowing if he will ever see Catherine again, leading to the Climax of the novel. We find Frederic with sense of guilt for leaving the army in these words "I feel like a criminal. I've deserted from the army" (p.269). After you swim across the river to get to the woman you love, climax is ensured. At least in *A Farewell to Arms*, Frederic was forced into deserting anyway. He held on as long as he could, but it was either swim or die, and he chose to swim. The labour room presents us the suspense of the novel. Frederic in anticipation prays thus:

"Please, please, please, dear God, don't let her die

...God please make her not die. I'll do anything you say if you don't let her die." (P.353)

Everything is so nice for them in Switzerland until Catherine goes into labor. Suspense over whether the baby will die, and whether the baby is dead, just warm us up for the suspense Frederic is feeling in the lines we quote above. We hoped that Hemingway will leave us with a baby at the end of the novel to stand as ray of hope, but typical of modern literature that sees the hopelessness, disillusionment and despair that characterized human existence of this age the baby and the Catherine died. This brought us to the denouement. The baby is dead. Catherine is dead. And that's the only thing clear. Frederic tries, but he can't say good-by and have it feel like anything. Such a lonely conclusion, Frederic can evade death, but he can't help Catherine do it. And, at the end, he is all alone in the rain.

9. On Thematic Interpretation

In the 20th century, there question of self-discovery and consciousness of self-thrives in literature. In *A Farewell to Arms*, one of the themes of Frederic Henry's adventure as an ambulance driver during World War I is identity. This theme compounds other themes that Hemingway is exploring through the war story. Identity is important to the story because it expresses the general question of the individual in the post war world. The First World War raised some unsettling questions about the values the war generation had inherited. The contradictions that surround identity took even more complex look as we are faced with an American as Ambulance driver in Italian war front against Australia. Frederic's identity is displaced by the late introduction of his name to the reader, the question of his being an American in the Italian army, and his constant play with words. He speaks Italian, but not well enough to advance in rank. He also understands French and German but remains unmistakably American. When asked justify himself thus: "Tell me. Why did you join up with the Italians? "I was in Italy," I said, "and I spoke Italian." (P.22), Self is key to the modernist as there is a conscious attempt to understand even the inner self.

The above leads us to individualism as Hemingway's novel demonstrates the demise of loyalty to traditions and institutions that had been brought forward from the nineteenth century, a refocusing on the self often referred to as "individualism." His characters, especially Catherine Barkley (in terms of her fiancé's death at the hand of sophisticated infantry), all have war disgust. Each of them is able to avoid becoming crazy by falling back on the self. The bid to stay above the realities of existence also placed drug and alcohol in a special place to Hemingway's characters. Frederic opines thus:

I had treated seeing Catherine very lightly, I had gotten

somewhat drunk and had nearly forgotten to come but

when I could not see her there I was feeling lonely and hollow. (p.44)

We also see Jay Gatsby in *The Great Gatsby* going into sales of alcohol and making much money from it. This priority to given to alcohol helps each person rejects the "higher callings" of tradition, society, or institution. It is out of this effort to come to terms with the stupidity and horror of the Great War that the school of thought known as existentialism emerges, a movement which suggested that men and women should not accept society's or someone else's values, but rather examine the truth in him or herself. Hemingway may not be an existentialist, but his characters clearly exhibit a great deal of alienation from each other. Rinaldi for instance justifies his satisfaction of being a surgeon Thus: "We never get anything. We are born with all we have and we never learn. We never get anything new." (p.181)

War does not only provide a front for Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms* but also take a central place in the novel. The novel benefiting from the history of World War I became one of the most classic literary commentary on the futility of the war and the chaos that it brought on the modern man. Bloom (2010) edited Argues that

*A cultural shift in attitude—the beginnings of modernism
or the modernist outlook—was a direct consequence of the
war. An entire generation of thoughtful, educated, formerly*

idealistic men and women in Europe and the United States experienced a collapse of the traditional verities of honor, service, patriotism, and commitment to country. Cynicism was stronger than aspiration, meaninglessness and alienation were more commonly experienced than hopeful and righteous purposefulness.

War is also a disease. Rinaldi refers to his own condition of gonorrhoea and says everyone has it. However, we know from earlier discussions that everyone too has war disgust puts it in these words: "They blew him all to bits." To show the waste that typifies warfare. This can be linked to T. S. Eliot's poem *The Waste Land* the sees the modern era as a destroyed generation. Scott Fitzgerald captures in the ash that filled the valley between the East and the West in *The Great Gatsby*. Hemingway's narrator puts it thus: (p.60-61)

"Stretcher-bearers came in all the time, put their stretchers down, unloaded them and went away."

In exploring the theme of war as usual, Hemingway mirrors the thin line that demarcates life from death. Many things are dying in the modern man aside death as we know it, death of human relation, collapse of the essence of life and what is humane. We are presented with death of Catherine and her baby which comments on the death of even the future generation that would have served us with hope in the novel. All of this captures the injured and dead condition of life that the war presents them with. The issue of patriotism and the meaningless idea that it stands for in relation to war is also brought to fore as the reason for the war in a mirage to most of the war characters we are presented with. There is therefore a deliberately question the idea of bravery and courage in the war sense of it.

Hemingway in this novel also explores the issue of love, and to show its universality and the tendency for that affection in all circumstance, we are confronted with love in a war story. Frederic declares his love for Catherine in these words: "You don't have to pretend you love me..." "But I do love you." (p.32), he further justifies that Thus: We won't quarrel, baby. I love you too much. But don't be a fool." (p.72) The theme of love is placed side by side masculinity and sexuality especially as found in Renaldi. In relation to modernism, we have Hemingway through his character depicting the distorted, disillusioned and chaotic disorder that typifies human life in World War I Europe. There is a panoramic critique of religion in the priest, love in Frederic and Catherine, bravery and courage in his war characters. He therefore used the war to mirror life and existence holistically in the era in view.

10. In Defense of Style and Language

There is classic use of in media res in *A Farewell to Arms*. Literally, in media res is the middle of a thing. For the novel, this "thing," constantly referred to as "It," is the war. Hemingway is certainly not the first to use this technique to bring the reader immediately into the story. In fact, one of the greatest Western war stones of all time-Homer's *Iliad*-opens in the middle of the Trojan War. Hemingway's use of the technique sets the tone of the novel as one of distortion and alienation. There is also use of persona, originally referring to the mask worn by stage actors in ancient Greece, the persona is the image of the character as it is expressed in reaction to its environment. Hemingway reveals the persona of his main character by the way he reacts to the statements of others. This is demonstrated early in the novel by Frederic's non-reaction to Catherine's story she describes how her fiancé was "blown to bits," and Frederic's response is to say nothing. Rinaldi, on the other hand, is full of chivalry and charm because his persona is one of Italian machismo. The story is told from Frederic's point of view and thus it has his voice. However, as a further development of his persona, his voicing of the story rarely devolves to a personal-"I did this." Instead, he speaks in terms of "we" until finally he is all alone and, by default, an "I".

Dialogue also plays essential part in flavouring the thematic import of the novel. Hemingway employs dialogue at the expense of narrative whenever he can. He does this in order to avoid long passages of "unnecessary prose." Thus, he reveals information about the plot through a dialogue marked by terse, direct language which could be called common speech. This effort at realism also disables any attempt to define Hemingway's actual position on any of the themes in the novel. Since the story tells itself through the characters who are involved, the reader is left with his or her own thoughts on the subject-thoughts which are influenced by the speech of the characters, not Hemingway for his characters are never complicated people, either emotionally or intellectually, for if they were, the casual hard-boiled Hemingway manner would be incapable of dealing with them.

One stylistic technique, stream of consciousness, was most associated with Joyce. Yet, Hemingway also used this technique with regularity and it is an important element in his war novel, *A Farewell to Arms*. This technique uses the interior monologue of a character to convey information, and thus the reader is allowed a more fluid picture of the true thoughts of the character, in this case, Lieutenant Frederick Henry. This is related to the themes of drunkenness and confusion, escape and fantasy, and disillusionment. These themes are presented in a progression, as Henry becomes more demoralized about his life and the war. The first passage comes early, as he relives the experiences of his weeks on leave. The Lieutenant has been drinking and his memories flow like the speech of an intoxicated person; continuing on from one subject to the next without regard for the listener. Of course, the reader is the only "listener" here, but there is a sense that Henry truly is lost in his own thoughts. His reeling thoughts attempt to summarize the previous few weeks in the following passage:

"I had gone. . . to the smoke of cafes and nights when the room whirled and you needed to look at the wall, nights in bed, drunk, when you knew that that was all there was, and the strange excitement of waking and not knowing who it was with you, and the world all unreal in the dark"

and so exciting that you must resume again unknowing and not caring in the night, sure that this was all and all and all and not caring" (p.13).

To modernist writer, style and language takes a more prior place above the content of the form. Language or means of communicating their message becomes an end in itself. Writers therefore drive towards allegory to depict the deeper meaning of life. Language is distorted and semantically disobeyed to create room to express the chaotic realities of the 20th century. In relation to use of language in *A Farewell to Arms*, (MacShane, 1964) comment in these words:

The aim - the achievement - of the great prose writer is to use the words so that they shall seem new and alive because of their juxtaposition with other words. This gift Hemingway has supremely. Any sentence of his taken at random will hold your attention. And irresistibly. It does not matter where you take it.

From the opening of the novel, the description of the flora and fauna, falling leaves and dust all connotes deep images of waning life and existence. Metaphor assumes a significant place as well. In *A farewell to Arms*, this is brought forth in these words by the Captain; "Priest every night five against one." (p.7) Here, the metaphor is played out long over the course of their conversation, leaving no doubt that the captain is both suggesting that the priest five fingers are battling his manhood, but also suggests that the priest is a fraud and has five girls at once. When we think of the priest as a receiver of confessions, it takes on a deeper significance. The captain suggests that the priest's hand and the priest's penis are engaged in the battle of confession of sexual desire. Hemingway sort for an end to the war thus: "Let's drop the war." "There's no place to drop it." "Let's drop it anyway." (p.26) Frederic creates a powerful metaphor of the gory sight of the war thus: "The drops fell very slowly, as they fall from an icicle after the sun has gone" (p.66) This provoke a beautiful and horrible thought. On the one hand the beautiful image of an icicle dripping in the night and also pretty sunset, on the other hand Frederic pictures a man bleeding to death. We see red blood against the white ambulance sheet.

11. Hemingway's Characters and Characterization

Frederic Henry, the protagonist and narrator, is an American ambulance driver serving in northern Italy during World War I. Without religion or patriotic zeal, he has only his love for Catherine to sustain him. As his experiences in love and war deepen, he grows in awareness and allows himself to feel life more intensely. Most readers come to admire Henry for his ambulance service, his devotion to Catherine, and his willingness to acknowledge his failings, but other readers find him passive, irresponsible, and self-absorbed. We are forced at a point to believe that there is authorial intrusion in the Personality of Frederic considering Hemingway's personal experience in the World War I. However Frederic is an average modern man displaced in identity, searching for inner self and meaning of life and existence in the chaotic war. We can relate him to Mene in Ken Saro-Wiwa's *Sozaboy*. We see universalality of the modern man in him, falling in love in war front.

Catherine Barkley is the British nurse working in Italy during World War I who catches the casual and then sustained attention of Lieutenant Frederic Henry, the American, who is also in Italy working for the Italian war effort. Catherine has been traumatized by the sudden death of her fiancé who was killed in the battle at the Somme in France. Readers and critics differ widely in their understanding of Catherine, with adjectives ranging from pathetically passive to "heroic" (in the sense Hemingway's code entails). In Catherine, we are presented with the feminine of life in a typical World War I scenario. Hemingway drives us into the psychology of Catherine and the traumatic effect of the war on her. It is expedient to note that she had earlier lost her fiancée in a war as well. In feminist criticism modern critics of Hemingway calls him the epitome of the chauvinistic male pig as a writer. Specifically the feminist criticism was launched against the character of Catherine Barkley, who was seen as a "one-dimensional sex object." This criticism has died down more recently as Catherine has been viewed as more and more of a complex character. In her death Hemingway depicts the death of love as he bids love and arms farewell.

What religion represents or mean to the 20th century existence finds expression in the Priest. He is one of those rare characters whose presence calls everyone—some more uncomfortably than others—to an awareness of higher purpose and meaning while at the same time remaining likable and worthy of respect. The teasing he receives from some of the men about his celibacy does not alter his good natured and compassionate interactions with them—perhaps because he knows how uncomfortable and frightened the men are. The priest's view of the war evolves as the novel does; he finds it increasingly difficult to justify the immense and widespread suffering he witnesses. Most importantly, the priest provides the novel's definition of love—"When you love you wish to do things for" (p.77). This stands in contrast to what is "only passion and lust." (ibid) The priest has the greatest influence on Lieutenant Henry who is, at first, respectfully dismissive of the priest's views but becomes increasingly attentive to his presence and insight, result in his contracting syphilis. Inordinately but not awkwardly fond of Frederic, Rinaldi calls him his "best friend and my war brother." (p.181) Underneath the comradely banter, Rinaldi's loneliness seems obvious.

Helen Ferguson is a Scottish nurse who is ambivalent about Frederic Henry and protective of her friend Catherine, but she enables their relationship to develop. She gives hints of having experienced a past love affair that ended badly, but she keeps her life private, and we do not learn anything more about her. Miss Van Campen, head nurse at the Milan hospital, is an experienced medical professional who is also relentlessly authoritarian and difficult to like. She and Frederic clash from their first meeting. Hemingway's distaste for authoritarian women is well known, but his portrayal seems excessively unfair and cruel for a woman with huge responsibilities who must labor

under harsh conditions. Gage and Walker are also nurses at the hospital. Walker seems overwhelmed to the point of helplessness; Gage is helpful and harmlessly flirtatious. Manera, Passini, Gavuzzi, and Gordini are ambulance drivers with Lieutenant Henry. Passini is killed by a trench bomb; Gordini and Henry are wounded at the same time. Ettore Moretti, an Italian who was raised in the United States, is an officer in the Italian Army and an acquaintance of Frederic Henry. He is preoccupied with his promotions and boastful about his wounds and medals, which Catherine finds distasteful and boring. Ettore shows no signs of having an inner life, no place for doubt or ambivalence. He seems callous about killing enemy soldiers and, if the pay were better, he would fight for the U.S. Army. Count Greffi is an elderly cultured gentleman who befriends Frederic in Stresa and looks forward to their conversations. Before Frederic leaves with Catherine for Switzerland, the two have an important talk about death and one's purpose for living. Piani, Bonello, and Aymo are, with Lieutenant Henry, the last of the ambulance drivers to leave the front after the order comes to begin the retreat. Aymo is killed, and Bonello deserts when they leave the main route of retreat to seek a safer way to Udine. Henry is particularly saddened to lose the companionship of Aymo. Paramount to note therefore is that typical of modernist writers, Hemingway in *A Farewell to Arms* places his characters within context of war which in itself represent the World War I, war within the inner self, and war with nature and war even in love.

12. Conclusion

Conclusively, in drawing inference from above, there is justification in the argument of Ogude (1991) that "...there is a sense in which every literary work is a response to a definite historical and socio-political and condition..." Modernism of the 20th century did not only present the people with new consciousness that breaks from the classical past but also presented writer with fertile virgin ground to explore this new consciousness of disillusionment, despair and the meaningless of life and existence. Ernest Hemingway like many of his contemporaries laid a classic commentary on life during the World War I which is hitherto the modern era through his characters, theme as well as style. In relation to the title of the novel, Hemingway therefore bids farewell to the arms of war and love and even hope of the future generation. Style and language as learnt from the above therefore becomes important message in itself as typical of modernist writers.

References

- Abram, M. H. (1999). *A glossary of literary term*. Heinle and Henile: Massachusetts.
- Beasley, R. (2007). *Theorist of modernist poetry: T.S. Eliot, T.E. Hulme, ezra pound*. Routledge: New York and Canada.
- Bloom, H. E. (2010). *Bloom's guides: A farewell to arms*. Infobase Publishing: New York.
- Bressler, C. (2003). *Literary criticism: An introduction to theory and practice*. Pearson Educational Limited: London.
- Clerk, G. (2007). *Farewell to arms: A brief economic history of the world*. Princeton University Press: New York.
- Farley, A. (2013). *Elements of Modernism in American Literature*. The Classroom.
- Hering, F. (2010). *Teaching ernest hemingway's a farewell to arms from multi critical perspective*. Prestwick House: Clayton.
- Ker, I. D. (2004). *Literature and society in Africa*. Spectrum Books Limited: Ibadan.
- Lathbury, R. (2006). *American Modernism (1910-1945)*. Infobase Publishing: New York.
- MacShane, F. E. (1964). *Critical Writings of Ford Madox Ford*. U.S.A. University of Nebraska Press.
- Montrose, A. E. (1989). *Professing the renaissance: The poetics and politics of culture*. In *The New Historicism*, Veseer, A. H. (Ed.). Routledge: London.
- Ogude, E. S. (1991). *African literature and the Burden of history: Some reflection.* In *African literature and African historical experiences*. Heinemann Educational Books: Ibadan.
- Spender, S. (1963). *The struggle of the modern*. Hamish Hamiltom: London.
- Timeless, H. (2009). *The Ernest Hemingway Primer*. A Timeless Hemingway Publication.
- Wa Thiong'o, N. (1981). *Writers in politics*. Heinemann Publishers: London.