

TEACHING HEMINGWAY



Teaching Hemingway's

A Farewell to Arms

EDITED BY LISA TYLER

TEACHING HEMINGWAY'S *A Farewell to Arms*

TEACHING HEMINGWAY SERIES

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Teaching Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises*

Edited by Peter L. Hays

Teaching Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms*

Edited by Lisa Tyler

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Introduction

Lisa Tyler

A *FAREWELL to Arms* is, in my estimation, Ernest Hemingway's finest novel. Such a claim flies in the face of received wisdom, which would now award that honor to his much more popular debut novel, *The Sun Also Rises*. Certainly *Sun* has garnered the lion's share of critical attention. Hemingway bibliographer Kelli A. Larson conceded in 1992 that *The Sun Also Rises* is "clearly the most analyzed novel of the last fifteen years," with *A Farewell to Arms* "a distant second" (21).

That has not always been the case. In his early (1952) influential study *Hemingway: The Writer as Artist*, Carlos Baker, one of the first scholars to study Hemingway's work and later the official biographer of Hemingway, devoted many pages to *A Farewell to Arms*. He drew on the book's opening sentence to examine its contrasts between the plains and the mountains, creating a geographical reading of the novel that influenced many midcentury critics of Hemingway's work. (For further discussion of Baker's work, see Gail D. Sinclair's essay in this volume.)

Of the period immediately following Hemingway's death, Susan F. Beegel observes, "The vast majority of critics at work in the academy during this period were white Anglo-Saxon Protestant males, who shared World War II as their most important historic memory. Indeed, many were combat veterans. Their favorite novel was *A Farewell to Arms*, Hemingway's romantic tragedy of love and duty in a theater of war" ("Conclusion" 275). Beegel notes that it was only in the 1970s that *A Farewell to Arms* faded in popularity, ceding first

place to *The Sun Also Rises*: “Its lost-generation characters, alienated by World War I and self-anesthetized with alcohol, were familiar and appealing to an equally lost generation alienated by Vietnam and experimenting with drugs” (“Conclusion” 281).

Despite ebbs and flows in its popularity, however, *A Farewell to Arms* has always received scholarly attention. After all, while the novel may have lost ground in the 1970s, it was also in the 1970s that the availability of Hemingway’s manuscripts led to increased attention to the artistic evolution of his fiction (Beegel, “Conclusion” 283) and to the publication of what remain two of the best book-length studies of *A Farewell to Arms*.¹ *Hemingway’s First War: The Making of A Farewell to Arms* (1976), by Michael S. Reynolds, documented Hemingway’s own war experience, distinguished between the autobiographical elements of the novel and those that were researched, and persuasively demonstrated the importance of Hemingway’s reading to the construction of *A Farewell to Arms*. Bernard Oldsey’s 1979 book, *Hemingway’s Hidden Craft: The Writing of A Farewell to Arms*, also examined Hemingway’s composition process.

Increasingly during the late 1970s and early 1980s, Catherine Barkley attracted scrutiny in light of the growing influence of feminism on literary scholarship. In 1978, Judith Fetterley roundly attacked what she perceived as Hemingway’s pervasive misogyny: “the only good woman is a dead one, and even then there are questions” (71). Millicent Bell was equally disenchanted with Catherine: “She is a sort of inflated rubber woman available at will to the onanistic dreamer” (114). These charges went largely unanswered for many years and (I suspect) had the unfortunate effect of deterring many readers from even opening the book. Certainly anecdotal evidence would indicate that some college and university professors chose to drop Hemingway’s work from their course reading lists, largely for perceived sexism, and openly disparaged him to their students.

In 1981, with the publication of Joyce Wexler’s “E.R.A. for Hemingway: A Feminist Defense of *A Farewell to Arms*,” the tide slowly began to turn against feminist disparagement of Hemingway’s novel and especially of Catherine Barkley. The most influential rereadings of Catherine’s character were Sandra Whipple Spanier’s two essays arguing that Catherine chooses to overcome her trauma by willing herself to love Frederic Henry. Spanier brilliantly defended Catherine as the “code hero” of Hemingway’s novel.

With its letters, photographs, and journal entries, *Hemingway in Love and War*, Henry S. Villard’s 1989 collaboration with James Nagel, spurred a renewed interest in Agnes von Kurowsky and the nature of her relationship with Ernest,

which critics now generally concede was never consummated. That same year the *Hemingway Review* published a special issue exclusively on *A Farewell to Arms*, suggesting a resurgence of critical interest in the novel.

The publication of *Hemingway and Film* (Phillips), *Hemingway and the Movies* (Laurence), and *A Moving Picture Feast: The Filmgoer's Hemingway* (Oliver) during the 1980s focused attention on the many films based on Hemingway's writings, including both the 1932 and 1957 versions of *Farewell*. Also particularly popular in the 1980s were articles analyzing the influence of other writers upon Hemingway, including D. H. Lawrence and Norman Mailer (Balbert), Owen Wister (Price), and Shakespeare (Lockridge). Perhaps this trend was prompted at least in part by the publication early in that decade of *Hemingway's Library: A Composite Record* (Brasch and Sigman) and *Hemingway's Reading, 1910–1940: An Inventory* (Reynolds).

James Nagel's important 1987 article "Catherine Barkley and Retrospective Narration in *A Farewell to Arms*" calls readers' attention to the temporal distance between the narrated events of the novel and the time of the narration itself, reminding us that the only way we know Catherine at all is through the memories of a man who once loved her and is recalling his time with her long after she is dead. In the same vein, James Phelan's two 1990 articles on the novel introduce sophisticated narrative theory to critical study of *A Farewell to Arms*.

The 1986 publication of *The Garden of Eden* (with its own "crazy" Catherine B.) created new interest in Hemingway in general, but especially in *A Farewell to Arms*. Then in a highly controversial 1987 biography of Hemingway, Kenneth S. Lynn emphasized how Hemingway's mother "twinned" him with his older sister Marcelline, dressing them alike and holding Marcelline back from school a year so that they would enter school together. Lynn argued that this practice caused Hemingway more trauma than his 1918 wounding. The children's similar haircuts had their echo in *A Farewell to Arms*, a fact that, along with the publication of *The Garden of Eden*, has prompted scholars to reassess some of the details of Hemingway's work in a psychobiographical light. Mark Spilka, in *Hemingway's Quarrel with Androgyny* (1990), contended that Hemingway was uneasy with his own androgynous impulses and sometimes dealt with that uneasiness by becoming more noisily masculine. Carl P. Eby's 1999 work, *Hemingway's Fetishism: Psychoanalysis and the Mirror of Manhood*, offers a highly sophisticated psychoanalytic take on Hemingway's writings.

In the 1990s Jamie Barlowe-Kayes directed us to take a fresh look at Catherine Barkley, asking us to recognize the impossibility of fully coherent and stable readings of her as a character and of this complex text as a whole; Barlowe-Kayes

advocates that we instead opt for destabilizing readings that no longer repress “the incoherent, problematic, unstable aspects of life into superficially coherent, stable fictional narratives” (32).

As the divergent readings of the character of Catherine Barkley might suggest, gender has played an increasingly important role in analyses of *A Farewell to Arms*, although such approaches have been very unpopular with earlier generations of scholars. Homoerotic and homosexual themes in the novel have received growing attention, for example, in Miriam Mandel’s 1994 article examining Helen Ferguson’s attachment to Catherine, and in Peter F. Cohen’s 1995 article on the homoeroticism apparent in Frederic Henry’s relationship with Rinaldi. Twenty-first-century approaches note the costs of masculinity for Frederic Henry (Herndl), the performativity of gender for Catherine (Traber), and the intersections of war and gender in not only *Farewell* but also Hemingway’s other World War I writings (Vernon). Marc Hewson goes so far as to propose *A Farewell to Arms* as an example of what French feminist Hélène Cixous has termed *écriture féminine*. The novel’s wordplay has become a more recent focus, prompting articles by Kleinman in 1995 and Harrington in 2001.

While it is impossible to predict where the future will take Hemingway’s second novel, it is possible to make educated guesses as to likely developments. For example, the much-anticipated publication of the multivolume edition of Hemingway’s collected letters is likely to reinvigorate the study of all his works for some time to come by offering new avenues of investigation. Publication of a scholarly edition of the complete manuscript from which *The Garden of Eden* was posthumously created might also spark renewed interest in *Farewell*. Perhaps the most obvious opportunity for scholars interested in *Farewell* would be investigations of its influence upon later generations of writers and their work.

The richness of the essays in this collection testifies to the wide-ranging nature of Hemingway’s second, longer, and in my opinion aesthetically most complex novel. This collection is divided into five sections—Backgrounds and Contexts (with essays by Charles M. Oliver and Frederic J. Svoboda), Hemingway’s Language and Style (J. T. Barbarese, Gail D. Sinclair, and Kim Moreland), Modernism and World War I (Ellen Andrews Knodt, Jackson A. Niday II and James H. Meredith, and Jennifer Haytock), Gender Issues (Amy Lerman, Peter L. Hays, and Thomas Strychacz), and Pedagogical Approaches (Mark P. Ott, David Scoma, and Brenda G. Cornell).

In “History and Imagined History,” Charles M. Oliver examines the historical and biographical background of *A Farewell to Arms*, spelling out which aspects of Frederic’s experience are autobiographical and which are purely fictional and based on Hemingway’s extensive research. Frederic J. Svoboda, a veteran

teacher of Hemingway's writings, suggests multiple contexts in which to teach *Farewell* and recommends a plethora of resources for classroom use.

Poet J. T. Barbarese devotes attention to Hemingway's legendary style and offers practical exercises for introducing that style to students unaccustomed to minimalism. Gail D. Sinclair walks students step-by-step through a close reading of individual paragraphs to help those new to literary analysis develop an appreciation for Hemingway and to prepare them to analyze literature on their own. Kim Moreland chooses one of the novel's classic passages—Frederic's discussion of the way certain words have changed in meaning because of their distortion during wartime—and shows how that key passage can unlock the meaning of the rest of the novel for students.

Ellen Andrews Knodt explores the question of modernist experimentation with point of view and argues for teaching this war novel *before* Fitzgerald's Jazz Age fiction and T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* to help students grasp the notion that World War I was the definitive experience of the Lost Generation. Captain Jackson A. Niday II and Lieutenant Colonel James H. Meredith, who have taught *Farewell* at the United States Air Force Academy, draw on the concept of distance—including geographical, chronological, and narrative distance—to lead their cadets to a greater understanding of the novel. Jennifer Haytock offers a detailed plan for teaching *Farewell* in a graduate seminar on war and American literature, including a proposed reading list and useful secondary sources.

Catherine Barkley and her development during the events Frederic narrates are the focus of Amy Lerman's essay, in which she presents a feminist argument for seeing Catherine as at least as central to the story as Frederic himself is. Peter L. Hays, a professor emeritus who taught the novel for many years, examines his own disquietude with the problematic Frederic Henry and the problems that uneasiness created for him when introducing the novel to students. Thomas Strychacz, who describes the experience of teaching *Farewell* at a women's college, asks his students to think about identity and masquerade in the novel and to explore the instability of its gender roles.

High school teacher Mark P. Ott explains how the Harkness model of pedagogy allows students to work out their own impressions of the novel through student-led discussion. David Scoma draws on a range of films for introducing the novel to increasingly reluctant readers with rapidly shrinking attention spans. Community college students in Brenda G. Cornell's classes become fledgling filmmakers—and active learners—through an innovative teaching method outlined in detail in her essay in this volume.

It is, I think, the collective hope of those of us involved with this volume that—through its authors' collective experience, intellectual rigor, practical

advice, conversational tone, sample syllabi, and enthusiastic encouragement—it inspires future generations of teachers to return to this iconically modernist novel so that students once again have the opportunity to understand its artistry for themselves.

NOTE

1. This introduction provides a brief and admittedly selective overview of the criticism of *A Farewell to Arms* during the last thirty years; for a more comprehensive checklist of work on the novel, see Monteiro.

BACKGROUNDS AND CONTEXTS

History and Imagined History

Charles M. Oliver

ONE OF the most interesting yet often misunderstood facts about Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms* is that it was written not so much from personal experience as from research. The author was wounded badly while driving ambulances for the American Red Cross in support of the Italian army, and he apparently had a love affair with a nurse; that is more or less the extent of his personal life that went into the novel. The rest is a mix of research and imagination.

It is fairly easy to summarize Hemingway's actual experiences in northern Italy during World War I, the setting for the novel, because he was involved for such a short period of time. He arrived in Italy on June 4, 1918; was wounded on July 8; arrived at the American hospital in Milan on July 17; spent the rest of the summer and early fall recuperating from two operations; and was discharged from Red Cross service on January 4, 1919, leaving for home that day, barely six months after his arrival in Italy.

The author's description of the Italian army's retreat from Caporetto (chapters 28–30) is so vivid that even Italian soldiers who had been in the retreat themselves could not believe that Hemingway had not been there as well. But he had not. He was eighteen at the time, in Kansas City on his first newspaper job, and he read about the battle in the *Kansas City Star's* front-page reports in late October and early November 1917, six months before he arrived in Italy. His rendering of the chaos during the retreat was accurate enough when he wrote about it ten years later that it could pass as a historical account. And Hemingway was fascinated by geography, so it doesn't take much to imagine that he studied the lay of the

land throughout the battlefields of northern Italy. Yet he did not visit any of the important eastern fronts before he wrote the novel.

Although he did not observe the retreat from Caporetto, he did observe firsthand the chaos. Hemingway also wrote an article for the *Toronto Star Weekly* (March 13, 1920) titled “How to Be Popular in Peace though a Slacker in War.” It was a slap at a group of Canadians who had avoided joining the army yet enjoyed telling war stories as if they had been there; if you read enough about the war, Hemingway tells them, then you can know enough to pretend you were there:

Buy or borrow a good history of the war. Study it carefully and you will be able to talk intelligently on any part of the front. In fact, you will more than once be able to prove the average returned veteran a pinnacle of inaccuracy if not unverity. The average soldier has a very abominable memory for names and dates. Take advantage of this. With a little conscientious study you should be able to prove to the man who was at first and second Ypres that he was not there at all. You, of course, are aided in this by the similarity of one day to another in the army. (*Dateline* 11)

Hemingway is clearly sarcastic in this article, but he knew from personal experience the importance of reading a “good history of the war.” His thorough research of the battlefields of northern Italy produced in *A Farewell to Arms* a historical, yet fictional, account.

It is probably true that Frederic Henry’s love affair with Catherine Barkley is based on Hemingway’s own love affair with Agnes von Kurowsky, but there are few actual parallels. Hemingway did not meet Agnes until he was delivered, badly wounded, to the Red Cross hospital in Milan in July 1918, and she became his nurse. There were apparently daily visits from Agnes while he was recuperating during the summer, but she was assigned for duty in Florence and then Treviso for most of the fall and early winter. Hemingway visited her in Treviso on December 8, but that was apparently the last time they saw each other. He thought it was a love affair, but there is considerable doubt that she did; while he was nineteen years old that summer, she was twenty-seven. According to Bernice Kert in her book *The Hemingway Women*, and based on letters and diary entries, the affair was not consummated. Hemingway left for home in January and received a Dear John letter from Agnes dated March 7, 1919, telling him that whatever relationship they had had was over.

According to James Brasch and Joseph Sigman in their work *Hemingway’s Library: A Composite Record*, Hemingway owned more than one hundred

books on World War I. It isn't clear when the books were purchased, but the following five titles were published early enough to be useful as source material for *A Farewell to Arms*: Charles M. Bakewell's *The Story of the American Red Cross in Italy* (1920); Martin Hardie and Warner Allen's *Our Italian Front* (1920); Douglas Johnson's *Battlefields of the World War, Western and Southern Fronts: A Study of Military Geography* (1921); and two government monographs, *Report of the Department of Military Affairs, January to July 1918* and *The War in Italy, No. 18* (soldier's edition, published in September 1918).

A Farewell to Arms may be the most interesting of Hemingway's ten published novels precisely because it is so rich both as a good story and as history. Yet it is always difficult in reading Hemingway to tell the difference between what is real and what is made up. Even his letters are a mix of fiction and nonfiction. One of the nice things about good fiction, however, is that readers can be carried along by a good story without concern for what is real and what is not.

Frederic Henry's narration of his wounding in chapter 9 is no doubt taken from the author's memory of his own out-of-body experience during his wounding on July 8.

I ate the end of my piece of cheese and took a swallow of wine. Through the other noise I heard a cough, then came the chuh-chuh-chuh-chuh—then there was a flash, as when a blast-furnace door is swung open, and a roar that started white and went red and on and on in a rushing wind. I tried to breathe 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. I went out swiftly, all of myself, and I knew I was dead and that it had all been a mistake to think you just died. Then I floated, and instead of going on I felt myself slide back. I breathed and I was back. (54)

Hemingway was active with the American Red Cross for just thirty-four days—from June 4, 1918, when he joined Ambulance Section 4 at Schio in northern Italy, until July 8, when he was wounded along the Piave River while distributing candy and cigarettes to Italian soldiers. He spent the rest of the summer and fall at the American hospital in Milan or on crutches, recuperating from two operations on his leg and the removal of 227 pieces of shrapnel (Baker, *Life Story* 56).

He was apparently the first American to be wounded in Italy (an American had been killed earlier) and so became something of a hero both in Milan, where he was visited by officers of the Red Cross and several friends, and in Oak Park, where the Chicago papers picked up his story. He was home by the

end of January 1919 and gave a talk to an assembly of Oak Park High School students on March 14, saying nothing that would take anything away from the hero's welcome home. He described his experience of being wounded by saying, according to the report that appeared the next week in the high school newspaper: "When the thing exploded, it seemed as if I was moving off somewhere in a sort of red din. I said to myself, 'Gee! Stein, you're dead' and then I began to feel myself pulling back to earth. Then I woke up. The sand bags had caved in on my legs and at first I felt disappointed that I had not been wounded" (*Hemingway at Oak Park High* 122).

Hemingway received two medals from the Italian government for his service with the American Red Cross: the Croce di Guerra and the Medaglia d'Argento al Valore.

THE WAR

The war in Europe began on June 28, 1914, with the assassination in Sarajevo of Austrian archduke Francis Ferdinand. The fighting began a few weeks later. The Allies were made up of England, France, Russia, Belgium, Serbia, Montenegro, and Japan; the Central Powers consisted of Germany, Austria-Hungary, and the Ottoman Empire (which became the modern Turkish republic in 1923). Americans felt the war almost immediately: there were restrictions on travel, the stock market crashed and then closed, and the import of goods from European markets was disrupted. Nevertheless, America did not get into the war until April 6, 1917, three years after it started. Even after the sinking of the *Lusitania* off the Irish coast by a German submarine on May 7, 1915, which cost the lives of 1,195 passengers, including 128 Americans, President Wilson hesitated to involve American military personnel. It was nearly two years later, when Germany declared submarine warfare against Great Britain, that the United States finally broke off relations with Germany in February 1917 and officially entered the war on April 6.

Congress passed the Selective Service Act on May 18, 1917. Six million men volunteered, and another four million were drafted for military service. A small force of American soldiers under General John J. Pershing went to France in June, but it would be another year before significant numbers of troops were in Europe to help stop the German army's advance. By July 1918 one million American soldiers were in France; by the war's end four months later (November 11, 1918), there were two million Americans fighting in the war (*Concise Dictionary* 1026).

The Americans arrived in Europe in time to help stop major drives by the German forces that threatened Paris, including significant battles at Cantigny, Château-Thierry, and Belleau Wood. The Americans were involved in counterattacks at St. Mihiel and in the Argonne Forest and were prepared for counterattacks at Metz, in northeastern France, when the war ended.

There were more than 53,000 American soldiers killed in the war, compared to almost 300,000 killed in World War II and about 34,000 in Korea. Perhaps as important as the soldiers fighting was the American relief effort after the war. Millions of tons of supplies were sent to Central and Eastern Europe, where 200 million people needed help. The American Relief Administration also sent \$134 million to Europe after the war, and supplies totaling another \$1 billion. Between 1914 and 1923, the United States government sent to Europe \$6 billion worth of food and supplies (*Concise Dictionary* 997).

THE AMERICAN RED CROSS

Several charity organizations in the United States contributed money and personnel to help Europeans after the war. The American Friends Service (the Quakers), for example, sent several units to Germany to help feed children. They collected and distributed more than \$9 million for the hunger relief efforts. The Jewish Joint Distribution Committee was formed in 1914 and by 1926 had spent \$69 million on various European projects, mostly involving the provision of food and medicine. Other active groups included the YMCA and YWCA, the Federal Council of Churches, the Knights of Columbus, the National Catholic Welfare Council, and the Rockefeller Foundation.

The Red Cross was organized by Clara Barton in 1881; she had been a nurse in hospitals in Washington, D.C., during the Civil War, and the Red Cross provided its first disaster relief in the Spanish-American War (1895–98). During World War I, even before American troops entered the war, the American Red Cross operated hospital units, recruited doctors and nurses, and supplied and staffed ambulances for Allied armies. Hemingway volunteered in the spring of 1918, along with his friend Ted Brumback, who had worked with him at the *Kansas City Star*.

The American Red Cross spent more than \$200 million in Europe between 1914 and 1923, most of it on medical relief for those affected by postwar epidemics, but a large portion of the money was spent on child care and refugee work; there were units of workers in twenty-four European countries in 1919. A medical unit of the Red Cross was involved in inoculating eight million people in Europe

against various epidemics (most of this work done after the war), and \$3 million worth of Red Cross supplies was sent to Russian hospitals and clinics.

In his book *The Story of the American Red Cross in Italy*, which was in Hemingway's library, Charles M. Bakewell writes that the retreat from Caporetto made the need for medical supplies especially great because of the Italian army's failure to anticipate major losses. Bakewell states that "one of the most serious losses sustained in the retreat was that of hospitals and hospital supplies. Not anticipating any break, the hospitals had been put well towards the front. More than one hundred were lost, as were, in addition, two principal magazines of supplies, considerably more than one-third of the entire medical equipment of the war zone" (28). At one point during the retreat from Caporetto in *A Farewell to Arms*, Frederic Henry, whose ambulances were stuck in the mud, laments the fact that "all I had to do was to get Pordenone with three ambulances. I had failed at that" (212).

TWO SIGNIFICANT BATTLES

Two World War I battlefields held special significance for Hemingway in *A Farewell to Arms*, and some knowledge of both is essential for an understanding of the author's underlying tone in the novel. The battles were fought along the Isonzo River in northeastern Italy and along the Somme in northern France.

There were twelve battles fought in the Isonzo valley, the river of which now forms part of the Italian border with Slovenia; the battle at Caporetto was the twelfth, and certainly the most devastating because it started a massive retreat by the Italians across the Tagliamento and Livenza rivers, into the plains north of Venice. By the time the Austrian-German armies outran their supplies on the Venetian plains and were forced to stop, 30,000 Italians had been killed and 70,000 wounded (Bakewell 22).

Frederic sees some of the dead along the roads that he and his friends in the ambulance corps take as they become part of the retreating Italian army, but he doesn't provide readers with the entire picture; he is too close to it. The historic disaster that took place is in what is not said, or even known, by Frederic.

Knowledge of the geography of northeastern Italy—especially of the Veneto plains, south of the Dolomite mountains and between the Piave and the Isonzo rivers—was essential for both the Italian and German-Austrian armies during World War I. In his short duty with the Italian ambulance service, Hemingway never got farther east than the Piave River, where he was wounded on July 8, 1918. He had such knowledge of the territory, however, most of it from studying the maps later, that he would re-create in *A Farewell*

to *Arms* the retreat from Caporetto with such accuracy that Italian historians (as well as the soldiers) were convinced that Hemingway had been there.

The retreat began on October 24, 1917, in the rain. Mario Morselli writes the following in his book *Caporetto 1917: Victory or Defeat?*

The rainy weather had . . . a serious effect [on the advancing armies of Austria and Germany]. Usually the Tagliamento, a typical torrential stream, can be forded from the Cornino bridge all the way to the sea for about eight months of the year. However, by the time the Austro-German forces reached the river, its depth and width were such that, even with good bridging equipment, it could only be crossed with difficulty. The Tagliamento . . . was not the only water-course interfering with the advancing armies; once they reached the Venetian plains, there were several other rivers with their bridges destroyed and their banks overflowing. (26)

The Austrian-German Fourteenth Army, which was doing the attacking, was composed of 160 battalions, but only thirty-one engineering companies, and the engineers had the work, according to Morselli, of “installing radio stations, telephone and telegraph lines and repairing them” (26). No wonder the retreat was nearly as much of a disaster for the advancing Austrians as for the Italians. The Austrian-German army was virtually stopped at the Piave River. And the war ended a year later.

In reading *A Farewell to Arms*, it is even easier to miss the importance of the Somme battles in northern France; they are mentioned only in connection with the death of Catherine’s fiancé. The first battle took place between June 24 and November 13, 1916, and the second between March 21 and April 5, 1918. The date of the first battle is crucial in the novel, because Frederic and Catherine meet for the first time in the late summer or early fall of 1916, which means that her fiancé had just recently been killed, blown to “bits,” as Catherine informs Frederic.

The first battle was disastrous on both sides. The British and French armies fought to force the Germans out of a significant portion of occupied France. A total of three million men fought in that first battle on both sides, and one million were killed, wounded, or captured. The British forces attacked on the north side of the river, the French on the south. The German resistance was so enormous that the British lost 50,000 men on the first day. The gain for the British and French after four months of fighting was two hundred square miles of French territory and 80,000 German prisoners (Tucker 108).

No wonder Catherine seems “a little crazy” during her first meetings with Frederic. This knowledge of what Catherine has been through seems to negate the early criticism of her portrayal as a mere sex object. She has gone through far

more trauma than he has at this point in the novel. Only Frederic's wounding, followed by his involvement in the retreat, his fear of being shot as a traitor by battle police at the Tagliamento, and his escape into the river, creates for him a balance with Catherine in their respective traumatic experiences.

Frederic's "separate peace" comes along with his discovery during the retreat from Caporetto, if not before, that war is hell and that nobody ever wins—though losing is worse. Thirteen years after the publication of *A Farewell to Arms*, Hemingway edited an anthology of war stories, *Men at War: The Best War Stories of All Time*. In the introduction, he writes that he "hates war and hates all the politicians whose mismanagement, gullibility, cupidity, selfishness and ambition brought on this present war [World War II] and made it inevitable." He adds, however: "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 happen in a war" (xi).

Included in *Men at War* is Stephen Crane's complete short novel *The Red Badge of Courage* (1895), written by a man born after the war was over. The story features vivid details of the battles and casualties of the American Civil War. Crane, too, depended on research, especially Mathew Brady's photographs. War is the subject of *Men at War*, but the theme of the eighty-two stories taken together seems to be that at the human level, it is the chaos in war that always prevails.

Hemingway also included in *Men at War* a selection from Stendhal's *The Charterhouse of Parma* (1839), which he titled "A Personal View of Waterloo." War is never as clear cut or as clever as the generals (or their governments or the historians who follow) would have us believe. The individual soldier is nearly always confused in battle and never sure of the outcome until he hears about it later. Stendhal offers a battle scene that demonstrates the "essence" of this truth. There is the main character's detailed description of a battle in which he is forced to fight, of his retreat from the fighting, and of his discovery *only* when he reads about it in the Paris newspapers the next day that it had been the Battle of Waterloo and that his side had lost. By 1942 Hemingway had experienced enough of the chaos of war to appreciate Stendhal's novel more than ever.

THE NOVEL

There is some confusion about when Hemingway began writing *A Farewell to Arms*. In a letter (dated March 17, 1929, from Paris) to his literary agent at Scribner's, Maxwell Perkins, Hemingway suggests that he began the novel in

early March of the previous year. He had written 45,000 words on another novel, tentatively titled *Jimmy Breen*, which he never finished. In an inscription in Dr. Carlos Guffey's copy of *A Farewell to Arms*, however, Hemingway outlines his progress with the novel, stating that "This book was started in Paris in January." Dr. Guffey delivered both of Pauline Hemingway's sons, Patrick and Gregory.

Hemingway wrote the new novel during stops in several locations, beginning in Paris. His letters to Perkins and to other friends not only provide a running account of progress on *A Farewell to Arms* but also indicate that the letters' recipients already knew about the new novel. By January 22, 1929, he had finished the final typed copy of *A Farewell to Arms*, and he invited Perkins to Key West for fishing and to pick up the typescript. Perkins spent about ten days with Hemingway and left on February 9, taking the novel back to Scribners in New York.

Perkins wrote a letter to his boss, Charles Scribner (dated February 14, 1929), indicating his excitement with the new novel and stating that the title "is a bitter phrase: war taints and damages the beautiful and the gallant, and degrades everyone;—and this book which is a *farewell* to it, as useless and hateful, would be only grim reading if it were not illuminated with the beauty of the world, and of the characters, even though damaged, of some people, and by love" (Bruccoli 88).

Scribners paid Hemingway \$16,000 for the serialization of the novel in *Scribner's Magazine*. Several exchanges of letters between Hemingway and Perkins show the author's struggle to keep in the book's four-letter words and a few descriptive passages that the editors at Scribners felt were not suitable for a family magazine. Several words were replaced with dashes: "We may drink—before Udine," for example, or "—the war." Hemingway won a few compromises, but Scribners was following the popular reaction to such language, and in 1929 readers were not yet ready for the greater freedom enjoyed by writers in the twenty-first century. Indeed, even the dashes did not stop the police in Boston from banning the June and July issues, parts 2 and 3 of the novel. According to a story in the *New York Times* (June 20, 1929), Boston's superintendent of police, Michael H. Crowley, barred the June issue of *Scribner's Magazine* from newsstands "because of objections to an installment of Ernest Hemingway's serial, 'A Farewell to Arms.' It is said that some persons deemed part of the installment salacious" ("Boston Police" 2). Crowley didn't define "salacious," but *Webster's New World Dictionary* defines it with the words "lecherous" and "erotically stimulating; pornographic." Crowley's complaint probably refers to the blanks Hemingway used, which still make clear the words he had in mind.

The *Times* story went on to say, however, that police action “was similar to locking the stable door after the horse had been stolen, because the June issue of *Scribner’s* had been on sale since May 25.” The Boston police superintendent certainly brought attention to the novel and no doubt increased the sales of both the serialization and, later, the book. Part 1 (in the May issue) had been sold in Boston, and copies of the June and July issues had been distributed to book stores and corner kiosks before the police began collecting and destroying copies, so the word was out, even in Boston.

The novel was published in book form by Scribner’s on September 27, 1929, in an issue of 31,050 copies at \$2.50 each. The first book edition is the same as the magazine version except that in a few cases words replace dashes.

Audre Hanneman notes in her Hemingway bibliography that *A Farewell to Arms* was reprinted twice in September, once in October, and three times in November. “By February 14, 1930, sales stood at 79,251.” *Publishers’ Weekly* reported on July 10, 1961, that the novel had sold 1,383,000 copies (Hanneman 23–24). And the work is still in print.

There was concern at Scribners that some of the novel’s characters might have real-life prototypes, so the second printing contains the following disclaimer: “None of the characters in this book is a living person, nor are the units or military organizations mentioned actual units or organizations.—E.H.” (This note was omitted after the second printing.) Despite these concerns, early reviews of the novel were generally favorable. Isabel Paterson in the *New York Herald Tribune* (September 27, 1929) wrote that Hemingway’s “style and point of view are now sufficiently fixed as to be easily recognizable. . . . The public knows what to expect.” Malcolm Cowley, for the same newspaper a few days later, wrote that Hemingway’s “name is generally mentioned with the respect that one accords to a legendary figure” (74). T. S. Matthews, in a review titled “Nothing Ever Happens to the Brave” for the *New Republic* (October 9, 1929), wrote: “The writings of Ernest Hemingway have very quickly put him in a prominent place among American writers, and his numerous admirers have looked forward with impatience and great expectations to his second novel. They should not be disappointed: ‘A Farewell to Arms’ is worthy of their hopes and of its author’s promise” (76). Clifton Fadiman in the *Nation* (October 30, 1929) wrote that “understatement is not so much a method with [Hemingway] as an instinctive habit of mind. (It is more or less an accident that it also happens to harmonize with the contemporary antiromantic tendency.) Consequently we believe in his love story” (83). John Dos Passos in *New Masses* (December 1, 1929) began his review by stating that “Hemingway’s *A Farewell to Arms* is the best written book that has seen the light in America for many a long day” (95).

H. L. Mencken wrote in the *American Mercury* (January 1930) that “The virtue of [*A Farewell to Arms*] lies in its brilliant evocation of the horrible squalor and confusion of war—specifically, of war *a la Italienne*” (97).

There were also early reviews, however, that criticized Hemingway for writing “venereal fiction” or accused him of providing “vicarious [sexual] satisfaction” to readers (qtd. in Donaldson, *New Essays* 12). The *Bookman* ran a review by Robert Herrick titled “What Is Dirt?” (November 1929) in which the writer asks: “What is sexual evil? What ‘contaminates’ the adolescent or even the mature mind?” (86). Herrick compares *A Farewell to Arms* with *All Quiet on the Western Front*, both published in the same year. He concludes that “although the two stories present similar material, although both deal ‘nakedly’ with certain common physiological functions, one, I maintain, is literature and the other it would not be too strong to call mere garbage” (87). For Herrick, Hemingway’s novel falls into the “garbage” category.

Herrick’s review, plus a follow-up essay by M. K. Hare in the March 1930 issue of the *Bookman*, and an essay in criticism, “In Spite of Robert Herrick,” by Louis Henry Cohn for his *A Bibliography of the Works of Ernest Hemingway*, became touchstones for later declarations for and against literary censorship, ideas still reverberating today in public schools with lists of books removed from library shelves.

Hemingway had no stomach for negative reviews or criticism, and Perkins was wise enough to send telegrams encouraging the author with general comments about the reviews, plus print-run and sales figures: “FIRST REVIEW SPLENDID STOP PROSPECTS BRIGHT” (September 28, 1929) and “ALREADY GETTING REORDERS STOP VERY FINE PRESS” (October 3, 1929). Perkins let Hemingway know that by October 15, 28,000 copies had been sold of a total 50,000 printed; that 57,000 had been sold by December 7; and that 59,000 had been sold by December 9 (Reynolds, *Hemingway’s First War* 78–81).

The book created enough of a sensation to spawn the production of two film adaptations of the novel, a Broadway play, five radio dramatizations, and three television productions. Gary Cooper and Helen Hayes played lead roles in the first film in 1932; Rock Hudson and Jennifer Jones performed lead roles in the 1957 version. The radio productions included such leading actors and actresses as Orson Welles with Katharine Hepburn, Frederic March with Florence Eldridge, and Humphrey Bogart with Joan Fontaine.

Hemingway reported an advance of \$750 for the Laurence Stallings Broadway adaptation, which had a run of three weeks in September 1930. He received \$24,000 for the sale of the movie rights for the 1932 Paramount Pictures film (Brucoli 121).