

**Masculinity and Gender in *A Farewell to Arms*:  
Creating Understanding in the Secondary School Classroom**

Senior Paper

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
For a Degree Bachelor of Arts with  
A Major in Literature at  
The University of North Carolina at Asheville  
Fall 2006

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LIT 491

12 December 2006

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Ernest Hemingway was known for his over-the-top bravado, his misogynistic tendencies, and his determination to find out what comprises the masculine condition. He filled his writing with the past, recalling his youth in an effort to situate himself in the literary world. In *A Farewell to Arms*, Hemingway creates Frederic Henry - an ambulance driver on the Italian front during WWI - and weaves a complex story of love, gender interaction and masculine identity. Confronting these issues in the high school classroom presents a serious challenge, and instructing students in a close reading of *A Farewell to Arms* requires an English teacher to understand the inner workings of the novel, as well as the current critical analysis of masculinity and gender within Hemingway's writing. Students also provide a valuable resource, injecting new ideas and interpretations into the classroom. By combining teacher instruction with student interaction, an equilibrium can be reached where student and teacher move toward a greater understanding of the text. *A Farewell to Arms* is a complex novel that can alienate some high school students, and it is only through careful consideration of the students' reading, interpretation, and critical analyses that an instructor can help them create a meaningful understanding of the novel. This meaningful understanding is a teacher's motivation, and Robert Scholes says, "the proper consumption of literature we

call 'interpretation,' and the teaching of this skill... is [an English teacher's] greatest glory" (5). Creating a framework of background knowledge of the criticism on gender and masculinity issues in *A Farewell to Arms* will give students a better understanding of the text, and enable them to use their own life experiences to respond to the novel. It is these latest criticisms on masculinity and gender that I will use here to provide background for understanding Lieutenant Frederic Henry's changing masculinity in *A Farewell to Arms*, and then I will outline the pedagogy needed to teach the novel in the secondary school classroom.

When *A Farewell to Arms* was first introduced, critics were reading it with a close eye on Hemingway's life, attesting that most parts of the novel could be seen as an autobiographical account of the author's tour of duty in Italy. In 1933, T. S. Eliot picked up the novel and said, "Hemingway is a writer for whom I have considerable respect; he seems to me to tell the truth about his own feelings at the moment they exist" (471). Eliot admired Hemingway for his truth, but he persuaded literary critics to move away from biographical criticism of Hemingway's works and see it as a piece of literature having meaning outside the author's life. Eliot was an early, influential practitioner of the New Criticism, and *A Farewell to Arms* was pored over by critics in an effort to reread this work as separate from its author.

After almost thirty years, the critical conversation progressed again in the 1960's and 70's as feminist readers were appalled at the fact that Hemingway's misogynistic characters in the novel were so easily glossed over. Due to this, two characters - Lieutenant Frederic Henry and Rinaldi - received a new interpretation as the concepts of their masculine and feminine identity were deconstructed and redefined. Gender theorists

also began to reexamine the novel's balancing of the feminine and masculine condition. Feminist critic Judith Fetterley discusses Frederic Henry as a misogynistic character whose "real definition of a good woman is she who knows what she exists for and does it and lets you know she likes it" (204). Feminist and gender criticism of the novel such as Fetterley's began as an all out attack on the stereotypical roles of men and women in the novel, but then later critics began to re-think their earlier positions on Frederic and Catherine's characterization in the text. This re-thinking saw Catherine as a strong, female presence in the novel and Frederic as her equal, not her superior. The criticism also shows a change in the evaluation of Frederic's masculinity, and this change mimics Frederic's growth from a misogynist at the start of the novel to a deserter, not only from the Italian front, but from his old ideas of masculinity.

Throughout the start of *A Farewell to Arms*, Lieutenant Henry finds himself involved in conversations with Rinaldi, a surgeon who is stationed with him on the Italian front during World War I. Henry is an ambulance driver, and he has a lot of spare time on his hands because the Italians and the Austrians have stopped fighting for the winter. Henry and his friends spend time socializing, and many of the conversations end with Rinaldi attempting to rile a priest who is also stationed with them. Henry finds himself constantly defending the priest's celibacy from Rinaldi's taunts. Rinaldi goes one step further and confronts the priest one evening about his passivity. Rinaldi begins by saying,

"Priest wants us never to attack. Don't you want us to attack?"

"No. If there is a war I suppose we must attack." [said the priest]

"Must attack. Shall attack!" [said Rinaldi]

The priest nodded. (14) The impression given by Rinaldi is one of blind acceptance of his duty. He accuses the priest of not wanting to fight, but the priest counters by caving in to his demand for action and then agreeing that fighting is necessary. This is not good enough for Rinaldi who displays masculinity as not just a reaction to aggression by an outside influence, but as an absolute requirement to attack when ordered, even if those you are attacking are not aggressors. In "The Crisis of Masculinity, Reified Desire, and Catherine Barkley in *A Farewell to Arms*" Charles Hatten gives a definition for masculinity during World War I: Throughout the nineteenth century, masculine ideals had stressed personal autonomy as the sine qua non of masculine identity; the characteristic tendency of parents and popular literature to urge boys to confront and master fear was synecdochic of a more general male socialization in strenuous independence and mastery of self and of environment. (80) At this point in the novel Lieutenant Henry accepts this definition willingly because he does not come to the priest's aid as he has done several times before. The underlying theme in this dialogue between Rinaldi and the priest is having the courage not only to fight to the death, but also to pursue active combat as if it was your duty. What we know of Hemingway's life possibly can be seen as echoing this belief, especially while stationed in Schio, Italy as an ambulance driver. While there he said to his friend Brumback, "I'm fed up ... There's nothing here but scenery and too damn much of that. I'm going to get out of this ambulance section and see if I can't find out where the war is" (Baker 42). Making the assumption that Hemingway wrote this as an

autobiographical passage would be one possible interpretation, but these characters should be seen as separate from the author's life.

Soon Henry finds himself accompanying Rinaldi to the local hospital, and Rinaldi introduces Henry to Catherine Barkley, a Red Cross nurse. Rinaldi has been pursuing Catherine romantically, but Henry becomes enamored with her. Rinaldi unfortunately finds himself being pushed away as Henry and Catherine begin to develop a relationship. When Frederic Henry returns one evening from seeing Catherine, he has a discussion with Rinaldi:

"So you make progress with Miss Barkley?"

"We are friends."

"You have the pleasant air of a dog in heat."

I did not understand the word.

"Of a what?"

He explained.

"You," I said, "have the pleasant air of a dog who -"

"Stop it," he said. "In a little while we would say insulting things." He

laughed

"Good-night," I said.

"Good-night, little puppy."

I knocked over his candle with the pillow and got into bed in the dark.

Rinaldi picked up the candle, lit it and went on reading. (27)

This dialogue begins with a challenge and ends with the transfer of power from Rinaldi to Henry. When Henry returns, Rinaldi confronts him about what he has been doing

because he sees the need to relinquish his ownership of Catherine. Rinaldi's misogynistic attitude stems from his earlier attempts to convince Catherine that she should have a relationship with him. This need for transfer is not directly apparent to both its participants, and it can be seen as misogynistic. It implies that Catherine is a commodity, and this coincides with prominent American literary critic Leslie Fiedler's statement that Hemingway writes women as "mindless, soft, subservient; painless devices for extracting seed without human engagement" (318). In this view, Catherine is a thing - not a person - that Henry and Rinaldi must trade in order to conform to what seems to be Henry's masculine ruleset at this point in the novel. The right action here according to this reading is for Henry to let Rinaldi know what is going on and to seek approval of his sudden involvement with Catherine from Rinaldi. The event climaxes when Rinaldi backs down and tells Henry to "stop it" (27), and the transfer of power is complete when he relights the candle that Henry knocked over. This metaphor shows that Rinaldi is absolved from his involvement with Catherine, and that he harbors no ill will for Henry. This clearly demonstrates Henry's idea of power as a part of the masculine condition in the beginning of the novel.

As Henry and Catherine's meetings begin to take place more often, their relationship is turned into a game. Henry believes he knows the rules and engages Catherine in this game as he believes he should. Catherine is playing by a different set of rules, though, and after Henry tells her he loves her, she remarks:

"You're a nice boy," she said. "And you play it as well as you know how.

But it's a rotten game."

"Do you always know what people think?" [said Henry]

"Not always. But I do with you. You don't have to pretend you love me ..." (31)

Lieutenant Henry's short life has not let him develop an understanding of the intricacies of love, and he tells Catherine he loves her because he feels it is a requirement of the game they are playing. Again, a misogynistic idea motivates Henry to lie and say he loves her. It is the idea of a woman as frail and in need of reassurance in a relationship. This downplaying of the feminine is best expressed by Marc Hewson who says, "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" (52). This hierarchy prompts Catherine to respond by calling him a boy, and Frederic becomes defensive, bringing forth the notion that she couldn't possibly know what he or anyone else is really thinking. He becomes confused because he has misunderstood the rules, and he does not want to take the time to learn this new game. Henry implies that the masculine condition does not require a man to engage a woman on equal ground because he should only have to say "I love you" in order to be understood and succeed. Even though Catherine does not reciprocate Henry's feelings, he feels he is getting closer to her. Just as he starts to feel comfortable, he is sent to the front and wounded before he can explore his affection for her. He is moved from hospital to hospital and finds himself in Milan for his recovery. Henry is anxious to get back to the front, but his doctors tell him that he must convalesce for six months. This is a crushing blow to Lieutenant Henry's masculine ideal of duty, and he says: "But I can't wait six months."

The doctor spread his delicate fingers on the cap he held and smiled. "You are in such a hurry to get back to the front?" "Why not?" [said Henry] "It is very beautiful," he said. "You are a very noble young man." He stooped over and kissed me very delicately on the forehead. (98)

This dialogue demonstrates his feeling of the impending death of his masculine ideals if he is not allowed to go back to the front. War gave him the rules he must play by, and now that he is wounded, he would be discarded, no longer able to live up to his duty as a man. He is forced to wait, and this would be a psychological death for him. In "Invalid Masculinity: Silence, Hospitals, and Anesthesia in *A Farewell to Arms*" Diane Price Herndl discusses Henry's time waiting and says,

Convinced by patriotic fervor to embrace military service as a path to masculine feats of heroism, most soldiers discovered that the war meant waiting in a trench to be shelled. That Frederic Henry doesn't engage in trench warfare doesn't obviate this point; most of his experience of war consists of waiting—waiting out bad weather, waiting for shelling to begin so that he can drive his ambulance, or waiting in the hospital to get well.

He is wounded, in fact, while he is waiting. (40)

During the time Henry spends waiting, he begins to feel his masculinity is being challenged and even goes so far as to feminize the purveyor of his impending six-month wait time by talking about his "delicate fingers" and how he kissed him "very delicately on the forehead" (98). Even though he was only suffering from a wounded leg, Henry felt he was being psychologically killed by his inability to function in accordance with his

masculine identity. The doctors did not understand his need to get back to the front and were about to kill off his masculine ideals.

Henry eventually gets a doctor - Dr. Valenti - to operate early on his leg so that he can be brought back to the front. Catherine joins him at the hospital he was transferred to. He slowly recovers with Catherine's help, and as their relationship evolves, she tells Henry she is pregnant with his child. Henry begins drinking heavily, and his leave is revoked after he comes down with jaundice - a condition the nurses blame on his drinking. After he recovers, he says goodbye to Catherine and reports directly to the front. When he gets there, the Italian campaign has fallen apart and German soldiers have broken through the lines. Not long after Henry reports, he and his men are ordered to retreat. It is during this retreat that Henry's idea of masculinity as duty, courage, and ritual begins to come into direct conflict with his new found understanding of what it means to be a soldier. His determination of a masculine and feminine hierarchy changes as he becomes separated from the war. Charles Hatten emphasizes the loss of masculine agency and says, "in World War I, the masculine experience of war was itself so transformed by technology as to overwhelm notions of war as a site of individual masculine achievement" (81). War had become a technological battle, not a test of manly skill. In "War, Gender, and Ernest Hemingway," Alex Vernon describes the new kind of war being fought in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and says, "Soldiers rarely had the opportunity to fight the enemy, not in any classic sense in which one's own agency and skill might affect the outcome. Instead, bullets from great distance sprayed them, bombs dropped on them, and gas invaded their lungs, and they were powerless to prevent it"(209). Vernon goes on to address the

changing ideas of masculinity during this time and says, "alongside this disempowerment of the male soldier, this undermining of the very sense of active agency by which manhood in the Western world has long been defined, emerged an empowerment of women both at home and in service relatively near the front" (209). Henry begins to realize at this point in the novel that his position in the feminine and masculine hierarchy is about to change. He perceives his masculinity to be threatened by this realization, and he lashes out in an effort to return to his old ways of thinking. This is demonstrated when Henry is confronted with the desertion of two engineers who he needs to help him get his jeep unstuck. He deliberately shoots one of them in the back as they are fleeing. Henry says:

"Halt," I said. ... "I order you to halt," I called. They went a little faster. I opened up my holster, took the pistol, aimed at the one who had talked the most, and fired. I missed and they both started to run. I shot three times and dropped one. (204) Henry gives no rational thought to this procedure. He reacts purely out of his masculine sense of duty and kills a man who was fleeing from his duty. When he calls out for them to halt, they don't even start running until he fires a shot. This implies that they may not have been expecting him to open fire, and that Henry could have simply run to them and restrained them.

Henry felt betrayed by these two engineers who were not following what he thought was the proper code for men. He even takes his vengeance a step further by focusing his fire on the individual that had spoken to him. By killing this man, he is attempting to regain his place in the masculine and feminine hierarchy he is familiar with - at least for the moment.

The final chapters of *A Farewell to Arms* contain the transformation of Henry's male identity from self-serving to altruistic in motivation. I do not believe this is how Frederic Henry would have foreseen himself behaving, but it seems to come about naturally as the novel progresses. The idea of courage, fidelity to truth, and right action as being purely male could not hold up to life's complexity. As Henry moves further along the path of retreat, more and more soldiers find themselves coming together, and finally, a massive group of bodies is moving across the countryside. Battle police are executing officers further up the line, and Henry watches as men are shot because they are considered deserters, even though they followed orders. Henry's mind transforms in this exact moment, and he gives up his notion of duty and courage when confronted with the harsh reality of execution as justice. He sees now that "they [kill] you in the end. You could count on that. Stay around and they would kill you" (327). Taken literally the "they" in this sentence could be the Battle Police who were executing officers, but figuratively it was Henry's old ideas of masculinity that would eventually end his life if he did not change. He dives into the river to escape being shot himself, and it is the cleansing water of the river that gives Lieutenant Frederic Henry a new outlook and philosophy on life.

Near the end of the novel, Lieutenant Henry is reunited with Catherine after running from his would-be executioners. They go to Switzerland and live, awaiting the birth of their child. When the day finally arrives, Henry is devastated when he is notified that his son has been stillborn and Catherine is near death after complications in childbirth. He becomes distraught and says:

That was what you did. You died. You did not know what it was about.  
 You never had time to learn. They threw you in and told you the rules and  
 the first time they caught you off base they killed you. Or they killed you  
 gratuitously like Aymo. Or gave you syphilis like Rinaldi. But they killed  
 you in the end. You could count on that. Stay around and they would kill  
 you. (327)

The use of short, declarative sentences gives the reader a feeling of mounting anger, and when looked at closely, this paragraph contains a reinvention of Henry's masculine condition. He now sees that the duty, courage, and right action he associated with war could only come to one inevitable conclusion: death. This realization allows him to change his view and participate in war not as a masculine driven duty, but as a universal desire to survive. Lieutenant Frederic Henry may not have seen this ending coming when he started his journey in *A Farewell to Arms*, but the conclusion leaves the reader with a sense of masculinity as being at odds with war, and that survival was now aligned with Lieutenant Frederic Henry's new identity.

Using my interpretation and background knowledge of *A Farewell to Arms*, the teaching of the novel's intricate issues of masculinity and gender in the secondary school classroom can be approached in three distinct ways. First, students should be given the opportunity to validate their own response to the text in a reader-response setting. Second, they should use their own analysis of the text to decode the work using Robert Scholes three pedagogical goals for understanding texts. Finally, by re-reading certain passages the students can reflect on their analyses and discuss their reactions to the text with the rest of the class. Using these three steps in the secondary classroom will allow

students to express their individual opinions by blending their initial response with reflection on the issues of gender and masculinity in *A Farewell to Arms* and develop a more sophisticated stance.

Reader response in the secondary classroom relies heavily on the reader's initial reaction to the text. Ideally this would happen with no outside influences, but this can be problematic because students may bring these influences into the classroom. Their ideas of how to react to the text can be deeply ingrained due to another teacher's influence, or they can just as easily see themselves detached from the text, but preconceived notions of the text need to be overcome in order for the students to see how their life is connected with a work of literature. The power of the text can be partially revealed when these obstacles are overcome. Many students will focus on what they feel is the *correct* response based on outside influences. They have not been a part of the critical conversation surrounding the work and this may cause them to be worried that what they will say will be *wrong*. Gerald Graff, an English professor in the Department of English at the University of Illinois at Chicago, writes:

[In a] disconnected curriculum students in effect are asked to join an intellectual conversation that they rarely see, or see only in intermittent glimpses. Such a situation encourages students to respond by giving each teacher what he or she presumably "wants" even when it contradicts what other teachers want. (434)

High school English students want to interpret texts in ways that they perceive are "right." This takes the emphasis away from understanding the text in a useful way and places the reader in a position to forego any personal interpretation of the reading. An

English teacher should provide his or her students with the opportunity to react honestly to the text, providing students with the ability to have a reader's response to the work of literature that creates a critical conversation within the classroom and allows for differing opinions.

After the student begins to respond to the text, a chain reaction occurs that leads the student to seek more from the text than just one reading can provide. It requires reaction, reflection, and re-reading. The student's reaction is the basis for their response, causing them to seek out a further explanation for what they have read. The student then reflects on the text as a whole, calling on their own knowledge of characterization, theme, and symbolism to make connections between different parts of the text. Finally, the student's response may require the whole class to re-read certain parts of the text to build a solid foundation for understanding how he or she wishes to respond. The students can be instructed to use a reading log while they are reading to record their initial reactions and then later look back on what they wrote and reflect on it in a short transactional essay assignment. When confronted with gender and masculinity issues at this stage, many students may engage in a reader response based on their belief that the masculine condition is either oppressive or empowering in the novel. They may also decide that they lack some knowledge needed to understand the gender issues in the novel (Scholes 22). A transactional writing assignment can be helpful for the students to better understand the novel at this point. In his book *Reader Response in Secondary and College Classrooms*, Nicholas J. Karolides gathers several articles on gender in reader response theory. In his introduction he states:

Reader-response approaches are particularly well suited to teaching feminist and multicultural literature. Teachers, who themselves may be "outsiders," need not place themselves in a position of authority, expressing the "correct" interpretation. Instead of being outsiders peering in, students may undertake to assume the persona of the character in the text. This allows those outside the gender or ethnic group depicted in the text to become momentary insiders and those inside the gender or ethnic group to validate their own experiences. (235) Students can be assigned to write as if they were the opposite gender when responding to *A Farewell to Arms*, and this will provide the students with the ability to understand the complexity of the gender issues present in the novel. Students will also get a better understanding of their own gender and how it relates to the main characters in the text. By allowing students to assume different gender roles in the text through their individual reader responses, I will be able to create a better understanding in the students of not only other genders, but of their own gender as well.

When students begin their analyses of *A Farewell to Arms*, the actual reading of the novel should be completed before any background information on the masculinity and gender issues is discussed. Once the students have read the novel and engaged it with just an understanding of the basic concepts of plot, characterization, theme, and some symbolism, then the teacher can move to helping them decode the text. The decoding provides a connection between the text and their lives because we will see that they engage it on a level that requires little to no background knowledge, and the students can work to use their own social backgrounds and influences to guide them. In *Textual*

*Power*, Robert Scholes discusses the importance of understanding the differences in reading, interpretation, and criticism. He says, "reading is a largely unconscious activity" and goes on to say that "we can only read a story if we have read enough other stories to understand the basic elements of narrative coding" (21). The *code* students pick up on when reading a text allows them to make sense of the story by using what they have learned from other texts in the past. Scholes also defines three pedagogical strategies - reading, interpretation, and criticism, and it is within these three definitions that students are able to decode this text.

When students first attempt to decode *A Farewell to Arms*, they may encounter a style of dialogue that is foreign to them, and be unable to extract meaning from part of the text. They will also be presented with ideas of masculinity and gender that they may be unfamiliar with. Combine gender issues with confusing dialogue and many students may find Hemingway's writing hard to follow. Their coding may not have included reading that required them to decide who is speaking based on mood and sentence order. The first pedagogical goal - reading - is defined as the process by which a student uses prior textual knowledge to *read* the text, and it is this knowledge that will help him or her unravel Hemingway's complex dialogue. Rosemary Laughlin, a teacher at University High School in Urbana, Illinois, suggests that students compare Hemingway's writing to another author's such as Nathaniel Hawthorne in order to create textual knowledge. She describes Hawthorne's style as relying heavily on phrasing and metaphors while Hemingway "represents the more formal journalistic tradition in twentieth century literature, his trademarks being sparse diction, simple diction, minimal subordination, and direct phrasing" (Hutchinson 27). This comparison gives her students the coding

necessary to comprehend the text and then complete a writing assignment where they "translate the content of one writer into the style of another" (Hutchinson 27). This helps give the students the capability of reading and understanding texts that are written in styles with which they are not familiar.

It is at this point in the pedagogy I have outlined that a student may begin to question the main characters' motives based on gender and masculinity issues. They may look at Frederic's conversation with Rinaldi and read it as filled with overtly misogynistic themes and practices. They may see Catherine as being treated as a commodity within the dialogue of Henry and Rinaldi, and then use this reading to downplay Catherine's importance to the text. However, these readings are my own, and the students may have a completely different viewpoint on the interaction between Henry, Catherine, and Rinaldi. All types of readings will be respected, and they need to be discussed with the possibility that they have been influenced by outside knowledge of the author. The second pedagogical goal - interpretation - is defined as the process by which meaning is extracted from parts of the text, and this definition calls on the student to use background knowledge to create understanding. Some students may call on their own knowledge of Hemingway's life to create meaning. For example Margaret Bauer, author of "Forget the Legend and Read the Work: Teaching Two Stories by Ernest Hemingway," says that a student's "image of Hemingway as some macho hunter, drinker, womanizer, and misogynist often blinds them to any positive reading of his female characters" (125). Many students may not have this image of Hemingway because they have not been exposed to him prior to reading *A Farewell to Arms*, but some students in the class may raise questions about his life that influence the group's reading.

This could lead to an interpretation that finds Henry and Rinaldi as vehicles for Hemingway's alleged misogyny. These points can be validated, but students should be encouraged to decode the text initially without influence from the author's life. Margaret Bauer says, we "should not jump to conclusions about a work based on biographical knowledge (or pseudo-knowledge) of its creator" (124).

They may also find the novel difficult to read because of the quick move from the anger shown by Rinaldi due to Frederic's actions to Rinaldi's forgiveness and acceptance of Frederic's relationship with Catherine. This provides another basis for Scholes second point - interpretation - because the reader is moved by a "feeling of incompleteness" and because of this, "activates the interpretive process" (22). The student feels a need to move more deeply into his or her understanding of the reading by pushing for more background, historical, and social knowledge. Scholes states that "the relationship between a text and the world is not a given, but a problem," and this problem pushes the student to produce personal meaning from the text. A student may not understand why Rinaldi is upset by Frederic's actions or why Frederic becomes angry over Rinaldi's suggestion the he is a "little puppy." The unknown element here will cause a student to again think more deeply about this part of the text.

Another important concept to keep in mind while students decode the novel is the importance of not shying away from the gender and masculinity issues. Students may see Catherine as a tool used by Frederic to reinforce his misogyny and then determine that Hemingway's life rules over the text. Although it is nearly impossible to expect outside knowledge not to affect their reading, these students again should be persuaded to relinquish (in so far as possible) any prior knowledge of the author's life. Students may

still continue to use the author's life as a background for decoding, and it is within the dialogue among critical stances that students develop a greater understanding of the literature. The third pedagogical goal - criticism - is defined as the analysis that a certain group makes about the text, and it is by having the students explore a critical stance that a social connection between the work and the student is made (Scholes 23). In "Reading Students Reading in the Postcanonical Age," Miriam Clark states:

Understanding a text's power involves recognizing its *usefulness*; it demands a close if also highly intuitive consideration of motives - the author's, the reader's - that range from private circumstances (bodily, psychological, familial, financial, etc.) to social and historical conditions to broadly defined human nature (299) Students will want to use their own life experiences and that of the author's to determine its usefulness. This will stimulate a conversation that will have many different viewpoints, each one considered and respected. These differing viewpoints may contradict each other when it comes to masculine and gender issues in the novel, and one point in the text where this could become a problem is Catherine's death in childbirth at the end of the novel. Some students may adopt a feminist critical stance and see this as a triumph for Frederic's misogyny because he has retained his position of dominance and gained more power by her death. They may echo the sentiments of Millicent Bell, Professor of English Emerita at Boston University, who says in her article "Pseudoautobiography and Personal Metaphor" that Catherine "is a sort of inflated rubber woman available at will to the onanistic dreamer" (119). They also may fall into the opposite critical stance where they see a need to release the old idea of the

Hemingway legend and read Catherine within the context of gender related criticism. In "Performing the Feminine in *A Farewell to Arms*," Daniel Traber argues that Catherine is not "one of the Hemingway women ... [used] to prove Hemingway's misogyny" but a "central female character [used] to critique gender roles and their naturalized social functions" (28). When students encounter the conversation between Frederic and Catherine just prior to her death, they should read it unburdened by what they perceive as *right* and form a criticism based on their own social stance. This allows them to come to their own conclusions of how masculinity and gender are approached in the novel and open up a dialogue of conversation.

Students will also develop a critical understanding of the text using biographical, historical, or social influences. The students now take on the role of speaker for a group, determining what must be reconciled in the text so that a student outside their group can understand the implications of the text as they see them. Near the end of *A Farewell to Arms*, Catherine is in labor, talking to Frederic and the doctor:

"That was a very big one," Catherine said. Her voice was very strange. "I am not going to die now, darling. I'm past where I was going to die. Aren't you glad?"

"Don't you get in that place again." "I won't. I'm not afraid of it though. I won't die, darling." "You will not do any such foolishness," the doctor said. "You will not die and leave your husband."

"Oh, no. I won't die. I wouldn't die. It's silly to die. There it comes. *Give it to me.*" (341)

Many students will read this passage as a foreshadowing of the imminent death of Catherine, but a lack of knowledge of what is meant by the italicized phrase, "*give it to me*" and other nuances hidden in this conversation could possibly push the students to begin work on extracting its critical importance. After the students have developed their own understanding of this passage, they will begin to look at it with a critical eye, relying on the group they have chosen to provide the knowledge they need to analyze the text. A high school English teacher will need to be prepared to discuss many criticisms of this passage, and then give the students feedback by which they can modify or re-code their group's criticism. When dealing specifically with masculine and feminine identity in the novel, some students' criticism may parallel that of feminist critic Judith Fetterley, who sees this passage as indicative of the idea that, "a soldier's primary responsibility is to himself but a woman is responsible even in the moment of her death to men" (206). Fetterley describes Frederic as the person we feel sorry for at the end of the novel because he is left alone, even though Catherine is the one who has died (207). Unfortunately, Fetterley lets the Hemingway legend inform her position when she describes Catherine and Frederic's relationship as "going nowhere" and [w]hen it threatens to go forward, it conveniently ends by Catherine's death in childbirth, that "cloud," as John Killinger puts it, "spread by the *author* [italics mine] as a disguise for pulling off a *deus ex machina* to save his hero from the existential hell of a complicated life". (210) It is my opinion that biographical knowledge should be mostly avoided when addressing the text, but some students may see no other way to critically analyze the novel when dealing with gender issues in the novel. If a student feels that authorial intent is

unavoidable, then they should look to the text for proof of their position, and not rely on what they know of Hemingway's life.

Creating understanding about gender and masculinity issues in *A Farewell to Arms* within the secondary classroom will be challenging for many teachers. Maintaining a balance of critical conversation within the classroom while addressing his or her own analysis of the text can be problematic for an instructor, but this can easily be overcome if a system of strategies is put into place to guide the discussion. Reader response can be used to gather a student's personal reaction to the text, and after reading the text, the student's response can be used as a guide for interpretation, allowing him or her to fill in any gaps in their knowledge about the text. When the individual interpretation that has been guided by the instructor is complete, a critical conversation will form within the classroom, with each student voicing the opinion of the critical group their interpretation falls into. All of these strategies can be used to discuss the gender and masculinity issues in *A Farewell to Arms*, and students may gain a more realistic understanding of the character's views on gender and masculinity in the novel by applying them in the secondary school classroom.

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