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THE DOMINANT COLORS IN A FAREWELL TO ARMS

by 557

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B. A., Tsuda College, 1956

A MASTER'S REPORT

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree

MASTER OF ARTS

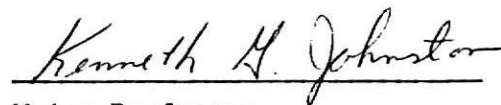
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1971

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THE DOMINANT COLORS IN A FAREWELL TO ARMS

When Ernest Hemingway was asked by an interviewer about his literary forebears, "those you have learned the most from," he replied by reciting a long list of creative people, which included the names of nine painters: Tintoretto, Hieronymus Bosch, Breughel, Patinier, Goya, Giotto, Cézanne, Van Gogh and Gauguin. "I put in painters . . .," explained Hemingway, "because I learn as much from painters about how to write as from writers."¹

Hemingway, in fact, acknowledged many times, both early and late in his career, the influence of painters on his work. Moreover, it is well known that he was an enthusiastic frequenter of the art galleries.² Yet despite Hemingway's public display of interest in painting and his open acknowledgment of its influence on his work, little investigation has been undertaken of his use of color. Not a single article dealing exclusively with this subject is listed in the Hanneman bibliography, a comprehensive work published in 1967, although there are several listed which investigate Hemingway's relationship to painting.³ And in the last three years, according to the PMLA bibliography, only one color study of Hemingway's fiction has been published.⁴

The reason for this critical neglect is perhaps due to the general belief that Hemingway simply used color realistically and, further, to his sparing use of bright-color adjectives. Charles Fenton tells us in The Apprenticeship of Ernest Hemingway that Hemingway learned to "avoid the use of adjectives" while working on the Kansas City Star.⁵ It is difficult to prove influence. However, this much is certain: Hemingway's avoidance of the redundant use of color adjectives functionally contributes to his depiction of the bleak modern world. The more sparing and selective, the more meaningful is his use of color. Hemingway, quite obviously, did not content himself with surface

realism; he carefully selected and stressed colors which the reader most readily associates with the natural setting, objects, and characters in the story but which, at the same time, convey the author's carefully conceived and executed dramatic and symbolic effect.

The two painters who won Hemingway's deepest admiration are Cézanne and Goya. Carlos Baker, Philip Young, and Constance Montgomery all remark on Cézanne's influence on Hemingway, especially in regard to his sense of landscape and weather.⁶ Hemingway himself says in A Moveable Feast: "I was learning something from the painting of Cézanne that made writing simple true sentences far from enough to make the stories have the dimensions that I was trying to put in them."⁷ That, of course, was written by an aging Hemingway reminiscing about his youth in Paris. But the young Hemingway, too, aspired to the artistic success of Cézanne, as is evidenced by this passage from the deleted conclusion to "Big Two-Hearted River," composed in early August, 1924:

"(Nick) wanted to be a great writer. . . . He, Nick, wanted to write about country so it would be there like Cézanne had done it in painting. You had to do it from inside yourself. . . . He felt almost holy about it. It was deadly serious. You could do it if you would fight it out. If you'd lived right with your eyes. . . . He knew just how Cézanne would paint this stretch of river. God, if he was only here to do it."⁸

Hemingway once wished also for the talents of Goya when he was trying to describe the dead mules in "The Natural History of the Dead" in Death in the Afternoon: "The numbers of broken-legged mules and horses drowning in the shallow water called for a Goya to depict them." Later on in the book he paid moving tribute to Goya, the artist who believed "in blacks and in grays, in dust and in light, in high places rising from plains. . . ."⁹

The blacks and the grays--and the whites and the reds--are the subject of this color study of A Farewell to Arms, a novel whose action takes place on the plains and "in high places rising from plains."

Hemingway simplifies and organizes his colors into a scheme consistent with his dramatic and symbolic subjects; moreover, he invests them, like leitmotifs, with associations expressive of his underlying vision of the modern world. He gives a single color or group of colors dramatic and symbolic meanings which are interwoven and inter-related within the unity of the whole.

The meaning of color in Hemingway's work, however, is both subjective and objective. He insists on his own impression of color, which is chiefly based on his experience in war and in nature, and then transforms this subjective meaning into an objective one. He does not limit the use of color to the color terms but extends it to the color images, such as snow, rain, night, sunlight, blood, and steel, and thus often suggests complex meanings which are a blend of responses both to the color and to the distinctive features of the image itself.

The chief purpose of this paper is to analyze the meanings and the functions of the predominant colors in A Farewell to Arms: gray, black, red, and white. The background hues of the whole novel are gray and black, mixed with red and contrasted to white. The proportionate combination of the four dominant colors epitomizes the "gray" modern world which is plagued by "red" warfare, a world in which man yearns for peace and love, but finds that these "white" hopes are illusive, stained with red, and destined to fade into gray and be blotted out finally by "black."

Gray, the color of rain and an ammunition truck, is used by the artist of this war novel as a symbol of trouble, disaster, and death. It is associated with rain, mist, or darkness. Gray is an unobtrusive color, yet for the perceptive reader it acts as a constant and sinister reminder that Hemingway's

war-torn world is plagued by death, disaster, and trouble.

Gray is introduced in the opening chapter of A Farewell to Arms in a mobile and disastrous context that is linked with war and love. "Gray motor trucks" move at night. In the daytime "small gray motor cars" pass very fast. In the autumn the "rains" come, and the leaves all fall. When there are "mists" over the river, motor trucks splash mud on the road and the troops are muddy and wet in their capes. Under their capes they have "gray leather boxes" heavy and bulky with the cartridges so that the men march "as though they were six months gone with child."¹⁰ Thus Hemingway in the opening two pages of the novel quickly establishes the relationship between gray and mist, rain, war, and pregnancy.

Gray, significantly, is one of two colors most frequently identified with Catherine. The other is "blonde color," which is associated with sunlight, its warmth and its regenerative power. These two colors suggest her counter-part roles in the novel, but the final impression one gets of Catherine is of tragedy. Gray foretells her doom.

Early in the novel, in Chapter Four, Catherine is introduced as a "blonde" with "a tawny skin and gray eyes" (p. 18). The relationship between blonde, or sunlight, and gray is figuratively described in the following passage:

. . . one day at the end of the fall when I was out where the oak forest had been I saw a cloud coming over the mountain. It came very fast and the sun went a dull yellow and then everything was gray and the sky was covered and the cloud came on down the mountain and suddenly we were in it and it was snow (p. 6).

Gray is just like a cloud that suddenly appears in the autumnal sky, covers it, dulls the sunlight, and brings about winter. Gray here is the swift, silent harbinger of ominous change.

Sometimes Hemingway's use of gray is somewhat startling because occasionally it appears in a context in which one expects relief and hope. In Chapter

Four, Frederic sees the sun coming through the window, gets out of bed, and goes to the window. As he looks out, he hears a motor truck starting on the road. He dresses and goes out to the garage, where he sees ten vehicles lined up side by side under a shed. "They were top-heavy, blunt-nosed ambulances, painted gray and built like moving-vans" (p. 15). Frederic checks the condition of the cars. Everything seems in good condition.

"Has there been any trouble getting parts?" I asked the sergeant mechanic.

"No, Signor Tenente."

"Where is the gasoline pump now?"

"At the same place."

"Good," I said and went back to the house and drank another bowl of coffee at the mess table. The coffee was a pale gray and sweet with condensed milk. Outside the window it was a lovely spring morning (p. 16).

This combination of bloneness (sun) and gray, of promise and doom, parallels Catherine's role in the story. Actually in the afternoon of the same day, Frederic will meet blonde Catherine for the first time. An interaction between blonde color and gray is clearly a motif in the novel, conveying the relationship between love (promise) and war (doom).

Both Frederic and Catherine are frequently associated with bloneness or sunlight in the Milan hospital section, although finally gray overwhelms blonde. The first gray that appears in the opening page of Book Two foreshadows the association between that color and trouble. Frederic, wounded, is carried in an ambulance to the Milan Hospital early in the morning. He smells the early morning air and sees the porter wearing "gray mustaches" (p. 81). Then there occurs a minor trouble. The stretcher will not go into the elevator, and they discuss whether it is better to lift Frederic off the stretcher or carry the stretcher up the stairs. This "gray" minor incident foreshadows greater pain and trouble later on.

Shortly, however, Frederic is blessed with sunlight. When he awakes

from sleep in the hospital, he sees "sunlight coming in through the shutters" (p. 84). When he gets them opened, he finds it "bright sunlight" (p. 86). The next morning again there is bright sunlight in his room when he awakes, and he hears from Miss Gage that Catherine is coming. One day later on during his convalescence Catherine comes in "looking fresh and lovely and sat on the bed and the sun rose" while he has the thermometer in his mouth (p. 102). Catherine's love serves as a restorative power for the shell-shocked Frederic's psyche. Just before his operation his mental condition is supreme while he is with Catherine. When the sun is up over the roofs, he sees the points of the cathedral "with the sunlight on them" (p. 105). "I was clean inside and outside and waiting for the doctor," Frederic remarks (p. 105).

But the gray disaster symbol, rain, is soon introduced. When Frederic and Catherine are talking on the balcony of the hospital, there is a mist over the town. The moon that is supposed to rise does not appear. The mist turns to rain. Hearing the rain falling, Catherine confesses that the rain "is very hard on loving," and that she "is afraid of rain" because she sometimes sees herself "dead in it" (p. 126). Clearly Catherine herself defines rain as a fatal symbol. And after this event it turns out that Miss Van Campen, who has found liquor bottles in Frederic's room, sees to it that Frederic does not get his convalescent leave. Thus by a casual incident, Frederic is hastened toward his most "rainy" fate, the retreat.

Throughout the retreat from Caporetto, rain keeps falling. And the rain vies with the blood in the darkness.

In Book Four, Frederic who has by now escaped from the war by plunging into the river, "washing away" everything in it (p. 232), goes in a Milan wine shop which "smelled of early morning" (p. 237), and asks for coffee. "The coffee was gray with milk" (p. 237). Gray still clings to Frederic.

But when he meets Catherine in Stresa, he finds that she still retains invigorating power. He wakes in the morning, Catherine still asleep, with the sunlight coming through the window (p. 250). But later, the electric light takes place of sunlight. "It was dark outside and the light over the head of the bed shone on her hair and on her neck and shoulders" (p. 258).

The rain, however, starts to fall in Stresa, and while the rain lashes the window-panes, Frederic is warned of his imminent arrest the next morning. He and Catherine hastily decide to further their escape by crossing the rain-swept lake to Switzerland.

In Book Five, upon coming close to the shore, they see the Swiss uniforms, which are "gray-green," a color combination signaling the disaster which is stalking their green (life-fulfilling) hopes. After landing on the shore, they feel "a cheerful rain" (p. 278), a phrase which paradoxically associates happiness and disaster, and in consequence conveys deceptiveness. Then a seemingly trivial incident takes place between Frederic and Catherine in the cafe, where there appears a gray cat, which serves as a foreshadowing of the death of Catherine's baby. Frederic asks Catherine (whom he occasionally calls "Cat") if she has a passport.

"Of course. Oh let's not talk about it. Let's be happy."

"I couldn't be any happier," I said. A fat gray cat with a tail that lifted like a plume crossed the floor to our table and curved against my leg to purr each time she rubbed. I reached down to stroke her. Catherine smiled at me very happily (p. 279).

They are "arrested" immediately after this scene (p. 279).

The lake in the Swiss Alps also changes color to reflect their shifting fortunes. At first, "there was snow on the tops of the mountains and the lake was a gray steel-blue" (p. 289). But later, it becomes "flat and gray as steel," more ominously suggesting war and death. Since the lake may be likened to Catherine's womb, her pregnancy may be foreseen as doomed.

Catherine is no longer a revitalizing power for Frederic. Sunlight has disappeared from around her, and she is now associated with moonlight. And Frederic's sleeplessness at night also starts in the snow-covered Alps.

"Go on to sleep," I said.

"All right. Let's sleep at exactly the same moment."

"All right."

But we did not. I was awake for quite a long time thinking about things and watching Catherine sleeping, the moonlight on her face. Then I went to sleep, too (p. 301).

Gray now becomes the dominant color in A Farewell to Arms. Even Catherine's hair color has undergone some change. The previous "fine blonde" (p. 99) has been faded into "a demi-blonde" (p. 329). And after her Caesarean operation in the Lausanne hospital, gray is the only color word that appears in the novel:

I thought Catherine was dead. She looked dead. Her face was gray, the part of it that I could see (p. 325).

I kissed Catherine. She was very gray and weak and tired (p. 326).

"Poor darling," Catherine said very softly. She looked gray (p. 330).

"Please go out of the room," the doctor said. "You cannot talk." Catherine winked at me, her face gray (p. 331).

The rain that has "turned the snow to slush and made the mountain-side dismal" (p. 306) keeps on falling until the last moment of the novel, when Frederic leaves the hospital and walks back to the hotel "in the rain" (p. 332). With the final word "rain," the novel ends.

The other grays that appear in the novel describe people, events, and objects that in one way or another are related to the wartime trouble or disasters. The King with "gray beard like a goat's chin tuft" passes in his motor car, troubled by his historic fate (p. 6). The priest in "his gray tunic" is doomed to move away from his dry, cold, and clean home in Abruzzi

(p. 7). German bicycle troops in "gray uniforms" hurry at the risk of their "healthy" lives (p. 211). The "fat gray-haired little lieutenant-colonel" is arrested at the Tagliamento to be executed (p. 223). When Frederic goes to meet Catherine in the British hospital, a shell falls nearby and there is "a hard bright burst and flash and then gray smoke" (p. 24). Frederic buys in Milan "a gray leather holster" before returning to the front (p. 148).

Gray is conveyed by such war-masculine images as gray army trucks, gray shell-burst smoke, gray uniforms and helmets, and gray hair and beards, as well as by such love-feminine images as gray milk, gray cat, gray lake, and Catherine's gray eyes. One recalls the "pregnant" troops who marched by in the opening chapter with "gray leather boxes" under their capes. Gray is thus closely related to war and love, and conveys the sense of disaster that war brings to love. Gray frames the novel and its divisions, and serves as a harbinger of ominous change that is accompanied by "deadly" rain. Like a cloud that suddenly appears in the autumnal sky and brings about winter, or like the rain that falls unexpectedly in winter and melts the snow, gray is also a symbol of treachery. As gray finally blots out blonde color, so war finally terminates love.¹¹

Black in A Farewell to Arms symbolizes violence, death, and war. It also conveys the state of mind of modern man afflicted with such emotions as fear, loneliness, despair, and disillusionment. Ultimately, black is the color of the nothingness, of the nada, which lies at the center of Hemingway's world.

One notices, in the opening chapter which sets the tone for the whole novel, that night and war are inseparably associated by the narrator:

There was fighting in the mountains and at night we could see

the flashes from the artillery. In the dark it was like summer lightning, but the nights were cool and there was not the feeling of a storm coming.

Sometimes in the dark we heard the troops marching under the window and guns going past pulled by motor-tractors (p. 3).

This realistic description of the fighting at night clearly conveys the close symbolic relationship between darkness and war. Significantly when daytime troops are mentioned in the opening chapter, the sky is darkened by dust or mist and clouds.

In the context of the autumnal tone of the opening chapter, the color term "black" in the phrase "the branches were bare and the trunks black with rain" (p. 4) makes one readily associate "black" with death and war. War is associated with the decay of nature, thus foreshadowing war's disastrous effect later revealed in the novel.

Black is suggested not only by the word "black" or by black images as "night" or "shadow," but also paradoxically by "lights" or "flashes." The searchlights, for example, which like the artillery flashes intensify the darkness, are a symbol of war in A Farewell to Arms. They produce ominous effect on the narrator-protagonist, Frederic Henry. They are consistently employed to suggest his state of mind, fear and loneliness, and also to foreshadow his direct involvement in the war. The description of the searchlights before Frederic gets wounded in the dugout, however, has a detached tone. He merely comments on the searchlights as scaring the crew (p. 51). But after his injury he is emotionally affected by the lights, as if they were a reminder of his physical and mental wound. He describes them while he is in the Milan hospital:

Afterward it was dark outside and I could see the beams of the search-lights moving in the sky. I watched for a while and then went to sleep. I slept heavily except once I woke sweating and scared and then went back to sleep trying to stay outside of my dream (p. 88).

Even after he is reunited with Catherine at the hospital, he cannot readily get rid of his fear and loneliness. After it has become "dark" in their room, Frederic and Catherine see "a searchlight come on" and watch "the beam move across the sky and then go off," and it gets dark again. ". . . It was dark again. . . . I worried in the night about some one coming up but Catherine said they were all asleep. Once in the night we went to sleep and when I woke she was not there. . . ." (p. 101). The scars that the war has left on his psyche are very deep. The symbolic darkness that the searchlights paradoxically illuminate is intense and poignant. The searchlights not only remind Frederic of his war injury but also foreshadow his inescapable re-involvement in the war. Having "recovered" from his wound, he is sent back to the front again, to become involved in a more desperate fate, the retreat.

The color term "black" also connotes various degrees of disorder and disruption that the war produces around Frederic. He observes the "black eyes" of one of the girls in a whorehouse during the retreat (p. 188), and then in the deserted farmhouse where he and Piani hide, he anticipates "a black night with the rain" (p. 218). The revealing incident occurs at night at the bank of the Tagliamento, when he is nearly executed on the charge of being a spy. "We stood in the rain and were taken out one at a time to be questioned and shot. So far they had shot every one they had questioned" (pp. 223-224). His routine military service has come to an end.

The combination of red and black, or blood and darkness, in A Farewell to Arms is an evocation of war and violence. The occasion on which Frederic is taken to the field hospital immediately after his injury in the dugout is a case in point:

I felt something dripping. At first it dropped slowly and regularly, then it pattered into a stream. I shouted to the driver. . . .

"The man on the stretcher over me has a hemorrhage."
 . . . In the dark I could not see where it came from the
 canvas overhead. I tried to move sideways so that it did not
 fall on me. Where it had run down under my shirt it was warm
 and sticky.

After a while "the man on the stretcher settled more comfortably" and "the
 drops fell very slowly, as they fall from an icicle after the sun has gone"
 (p. 61). (Hemingway similarly combines the colors in his poem "Champs
 D'honneur": "Soldiers pitch and cough and twitch--/All the world roars red
 and black.")¹²

The combination of black and red in A Farewell to Arms implies the re-
 lationship of war and lust, too. In "the bawdy house, the house for officers,"
 the Villa Rossa, they often drink "red wine in mugs" with "the lighted candles
 on the table" (p. 40).

Black, too, is frequently associated with Rinaldi, an Italian Lieutenant
 and skillful surgeon. Rinaldi wears "black boots" (p. 17). His hair is
 "black" (p. 174). The bread pudding that Frederic eats with him is "black,"
 too. They eat it in the bawdy house when the lamp is giving out "black smoke"
 (p. 175). One day he says that he has wanted to go to the "Black Forest" in
 Austria (p. 37). These blacks can convincingly be associated with war and
 death. As war gets worse, Rinaldi becomes sickly tired from overwork, is
 frequently drunk, and believes he has syphilis. Black is thus associated
 with the sinister effect of the war that deteriorates human conditions,
 diminishes humanity.

I do not quite agree with L. Moffitt Cecil who maintains, in his article
 "The Color of A Farewell to Arms," that black is used just realistically to
 designate the color of black boots, black dress, black horse, black hair, and
 black smoke.¹³ My assertion is that, although these objects are realistically
 described, they also function symbolically.

There are a few blacks which are not highly symbolic, but which still can be functionally linked with the war. One example is the "black" silhouette paper the old man cuts for Frederic's profiles during his convalescence in Milan. Frederic, one recalls, insists on wearing his military cap for his silhouette (p. 134). Another is Ettore's military decoration with silver lines on "a black background" (p. 121). Both Frederic and Ettore have suffered wounds in the war. The blacks of the silhouette and of the decoration betoken the deadly black background of the wartime world haunted by the silhouette of death.

The rest of the "black" color terms that appear in the novel are mostly related to Catherine's death in delivery. But the first association of Catherine with the color black occurs at the race track in Milan, where she favors and backs "a black horse" Japalac, which wins a "crooked" race but pays less than even money (p. 130). The next horse she backs is named "Light For Me," which finished fourth in a field of five (p. 130). The black color of Japalac, the last-minute treachery concerning the betting and odds on Japalac, and the fact that Light For Me loses,--all serve to foreshadow Catherine's death at the last moment of delivery.

The next equally symbolic and foreshadowing "black" appears in the passage describing Catherine's and Frederic's nighttime escape by boat across the lake to Switzerland. The context is also figurative, as will be discussed shortly.

What looked like a point ahead was a long high headland. I went further out in the lake to pass it. The lake was much narrower now. The moon was out again and the guardia di finanza could have seen our boat black on the water if they had been watching (p. 274).

The moon alternately appears and disappears, and their boat comes to "a narrower place" in the lake. The lake suggests Catherine's womb; the boat, her baby. In this context, the phrase "our boat black on the water" is highly

symbolic and foreshadowing.

Another "black" concerning Catherine's child-birth is seen in the description of the "black" dress which a woman in the cafe in Lausanne wears (p. 316). Frederic comes to the cafe for lunch, sees her, and wonders how many children she has. Later when the nurse shows Frederic his newborn son, he "saw the little dark face and dark hand, but . . . did not move or hear him cry" (p. 325).

These blacks which are related to Catherine's delivery cannot be dissociated from the war. Her death in delivery is not the direct effect of the war, but nevertheless it is a by-product. She lost her fiance at the front. ("They blew him all to bits" [p. 20]). Her love affair with Henry is originated in the field hospital.

The ending of the novel symbolically reveals nothingness and despair. Frederic dismisses the nurses, shuts the door, turns off the light, and in the darkness attempts a recovery of his past memory of love, but finding it futile, he walks back alone in the night to the hotel (p. 332).

The novel is tinted throughout with blackness, symbolizing war, death, and violence. The color also conveys other various dark facets of a disrupted world in which man is stricken with loneliness, fear, and despair. The major dramatic scenes involving flight, escape, and pursuit take place at night. Among them are Frederic's evacuation to the field dressing station, his retreat from Caporetto, his plunge into the river, his flight on the train to Milan, and finally Catherine's trip to the hospital in Lausanne. It is indeed a world of nada that Frederic discovers.¹⁴

In A Farewell to Arms red is the projection of blood. It is associated

with violence, death, and sexual lust, all of which are related to war.

War, violence, and death are especially realistically evoked by the use of such words as "blood," "bloody," "bleeding," "hemorrhage," and "butchers," as well as the use of the color adjective red. The first "bloody" red is used to describe a soldier with a hernia who, in an effort to escape duty in the front lines, throws away his truss, wounds himself in the head, in hopes that he will be taken to a hospital.

Then we saw a horse ambulance stopped by the road. Two men were lifting the hernia man to put him in. . . . His helmet was off and his forehead was bleeding below the hair line. His nose was skinned and there was dust on the bloody patch and dust in his hair (p. 36).

Because this bloody scene occurs back of the battle lines, it evokes a picture of greater bloodiness at the actual front.

At the front, Frederic soon experiences the greater bloodiness when he is wounded: ". . . 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" (p. 54). The red is symbolic of the erupting bloodiness of war. At the dressing station the doctors "worked with their sleeves up to their shoulders" and were "red as butchers" (p. 57). Frederic is lifted onto the table. "It was hard and slippery. There were many strong smells, chemical smells and the sweet smell of blood" (p. 59). It is indeed "a bloody war," as the doctor in the Milan hospital observes (p. 99).

The bloody red appears mostly in Book One and in Book Three of the novel, where the violent actions at the front and during the retreat are narrated. During the retreat Aymo is shot. "He lay in the mud on the side of the embankment, his feet pointing downhill, breathing blood irregularly" (p. 213). But this red incident of death reveals an irony--that of "gratuitous" death. "'Those were Italians that shot,' I said. 'They weren't Germans'" (p. 214).

The blood images culminate at the end of Book Three, after Frederic has deserted and made his "separate peace." As though to point up the futility of his attempt to flee from the war, Hemingway splashes the section with red. Note the description of the scene in which Frederic crawls under the canvas covering the freight car loaded with guns:

My forehead hit something that gave me a violent bump and I felt blood on my face but I crawled on in and lay flat. . . . The bump on my forehead was swollen and I stopped the bleeding by lying still and letting it coagulate, then picked away the dried blood except over the cut. It was nothing. I had no handkerchief, but feeling with my fingers I washed away where the dried blood had been. . . ." (pp. 229-230).

With a "bloody theatrical" farewell (p. 28), Book Three ends: "It was not my show any more and I wished this bloody train would get to Mestre and I would eat and stop thinking" (p. 232).

From this point on, only two more blood words appear in the novel. Significantly, they are in reference to Catherine's death in delivery. "'Mrs. Henry has had a hemorrhage'" (p. 330). "It seems she had one hemorrhage after another. They couldn't stop it. I went into the room and stayed with Catherine until she died" (p. 331). These references to the hemorrhage at the very end of the novel connect the "peaceful," idyllic Swiss world with that of the violent, deadly world of battle. Hemingway thus appears to be using the blood image to convey the idea that war is ubiquitous, that there is no safety anywhere.

There are some reds in the novel that are used in combination with other colors such as whites, grays, and blacks, and these combinations are always associated with the war. "The officers all wore helmets; better fitting helmets. . . . I identified them by their red and white striped collar mark" (p. 33). "The priest was young and blushed easily and wore a uniform like the rest of us but with a cross in dark red velvet above the left breast pocket of

his gray tunic" (p. 7). "Along the top of the stone bridge we could see German helmets moving. . . . They were bicycle troops. . . . They were ruddy and healthy-looking. . . . Their helmets and their gray uniforms were wet . . ." (p. 211). And the black X-ray plates made of Frederic's wounded leg are carried about the hospital "in red envelopes" (p. 95).

The rest of the red images in the novel are ascribed to red wines, red plushes, and red eyes. Together they convey a complex meaning: lust, danger, death, war, and unrestrained emotions.

In the case of red wines, they symbolize, in some instances, war and lust, while serving as a danger signal. There is a reference to red wine in the scene where Frederic is being carried into the Milan Hospital. It is a very painful experience for him, especially with his legs bent in the crowded elevator. A man whom Frederic has asked to straighten out his legs says he can't, giving out his stinking breath into Frederic's face. "His breath came in my face metallic with garlic and red wine" (p. 82).

Later on after his desertion and arrival at the hotel where Catherine is staying in Stresa, Frederic, drinking "civilized" martinis, confesses: "I had had too much red wine. . . ." Asked some questions by the barman, Frederic answers, "'Don't talk about the war.'" The war--and the red wine--were a long way off (p. 245).

In many cases, however, red wine connotes lust. When Frederic has been teased into drinking "red wine with mugs" by Rinaldi, on the night when he has an appointment with Catherine, he confesses: "Half-way through the wine I did not want any more. I remembered where I was going" (p. 40). On one occasion the loveliness of the red color of wine is appreciated, but, in this case also, sexual lust is implied:

. . . the wine, clear red, tannic and lovely, poured out into the glass

held with the same hand; after this course, the captain commenced picking on the priest. . . .

"Priest today with girls," the captain said looking at the priest and at me. The priest smiled and blushed and shook his head (p. 7).

Another distinctive feature of red is to signal a danger to come--a foreshadowing of death. During the retreat, in the farmhouse, Frederic drinks red wine. "I drank another cup of red wine" (p. 201). In the succeeding scene, Aymo's car gets stuck in the muddy road, and Frederic is forced to shoot the two sergeants, but somehow "gratuitously."

Only once does Frederic drink red wine with Catherine. The incident is unusual and significant, especially since they drink it in the whiteness of the Swiss Alps. The red wine is obviously a danger sign, a foreshadowing of Catherine's death in child-birth. Frederic and Catherine walk down the snow-covered mountain-side to the inn at the Bains de l'Alliaz, where they sit "inside warmed by the stove" and drink "hot red wine with spices and lemon in it" (p. 302). A realistic description of hot wine appreciated in the cold winter will easily make the reader fail to note the underlying meaning of the red. However, one will notice that on their way back they see foxes, suggestive of treachery. And the succeeding scene reveals that it has started to rain; there have been short thaws; and Frederic and Catherine are forced to leave the snow-melting, slushy mountain for Lausanne, where there is a hospital.

In case of the red plushes, they convey lust, while at the same time serving to foreshadow Frederic's involvement in the bloody retreat and the disastrous consequence of their love affair. Frederic and Catherine spend the last night in Milan in the hotel across from the station, since his convalescence leave is ended and he has been ordered to the front again. Catherine, upon entering the hotel room, "furnished in red plush," says, "I never felt like a whore before" (p. 152). After a splendid dinner, she returns to the subject,

but this time almost light-heartedly: "'Vice is a wonderful thing,' Catherine said. 'The people who go in for it seem to have good taste about it. The red plush is really fine. It's just the thing'" (p. 153). Then after some talk of their families, they are very still and they listen to the rain. The honk of a motor car reminds Frederic of the passage of time, of his limited time to be with Catherine, and he quotes two lines from Marvell's poem "To His Coy Mistress":

"But at my back I always hear
Time's winged chariot hurrying near."

Significantly Catherine recognizes the lines. Then they talk of their future: their baby and their "fine home." Then it is time for Frederic to say good-bye (p. 155).

The red eyes and face of Helen Ferguson, Catherine's friend and fellow nurse, convey a complex meaning: unrestrained emotion, lust, and death. Her redness is significant because it occurs in Book Four, the division of the novel which emphasizes the color white. Frederic has escaped from the war, "washing away everything in the river," and has come to Stresa for his genuine love commitment to Catherine. When Catherine is reunited with Frederic at Stresa, her face lights up and she blushes. But Ferguson gets angry, red in the face, because she is suspicious of their love relationship, thinking it just a mere affair, mere lust sanctioned by the war. She says, "If you had any shame it would be different. But you're God knows how many months gone with child and you think it's a joke and are all smiles because your seducer's come back. You've no shame and no feeling" (p. 247). Her eyes and nose get "red with crying" (p. 247). The red in this context is associated at once with sexual lust, the baby's death, and Ferguson's anger. It is to be noted that Ferguson has appeared in another scene that foreshadows Catherine's death

in delivery, the black-horse incident at the race track.

Cecil believes that "Ferguson's 'eyes and nose were red with crying' because she was angry and disappointed."¹⁵ Cecil, I believe, fails to understand Hemingway's deliberate use of color in both its dramatic and symbolic functions, which add to the unity, intensity, and depth of the novel. Nevertheless, the fact that Cecil has understood the color simply on a realistic basis is clear proof that Hemingway is skillful enough to employ symbolism under disguise of realism. What E. M. Halliday asserts concerning Hemingway's style in general certainly applies to his use of color: "Hemingway uses symbolism with a severe restraint that in his good work always staunchly protects his realism."¹⁶

The color red in A Farewell to Arms, then, is used both realistically and symbolically. On the level of realism, red conveys anger, guilt, and disgust; on the symbolic level, violence, lust, and death.¹⁷

White is a complex color in A Farewell to Arms. As a projection of both benevolent and tragic aspects of snow, white conveys cleanness, peacefulness, surcease, and serenity, and at the same time, remoteness, illusiveness, transiency, and death, all of which refer to both mental and physical conditions.

Hemingway submits, in the first paragraph of the opening chapter, the two completely different concepts of white, and allows the subtle reader a glimpse of the complex meaning of white.

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

except for the leaves (p. 3).

The first white, presented in the context of a lovely description of the river, conveys, as Carlos Baker has pointed out, a moral sense of clearness, dryness, and coldness,¹⁸ but the second white, part of the description of the dusty road along which the troops march, conveys the funeral service, death. The final impression of white in this passage, then, is one of evanescence, transiency.

Another example to show this aspect of white is seen in the second chapter. On the way to the front line, Frederic commands a panoramic view of the mountain ranges.

We went along the rough new military road that followed the crest of the ridge and I looked to the north at the two ranges of mountains, green and dark to the snow-line and then white and lovely in the sun. Then, as the road mounted along the ridge, I saw a third range of mountains, higher snow mountains, that looked chalky white and furrowed, with strange planes, and then there were mountains far off beyond all these that you could hardly tell if you really saw. Those were all the Austrians' mountains and we had nothing like them (p. 45).

The first white in the phrase "white and lovely in the sun" is an expression of the highest compliment in the Hemingway vocabulary. It is succeeded by "chalky white," which conveys both fragility and transiency. Immediately following this passage comes a revealing scene of discouragement, a description of troops and guns and broken houses.

Cecil, it may be noted, fails to get the total meaning of "chalky white"; he merely says that it means something unattainable.¹⁹ Carlos Baker also fails to understand it, stating rather simply that this panoramic view illustrates the mountain-home concept.²⁰ Neither seems to perceive entirely Hemingway's complex use of color.

There are other passages in the novel in which white conveys the idea of transiency. Frederic remembers Caporetto as "a little white town with a

campanile in a valley," and "a clean little town with a fountain in the square" (p. 164). Gino, who is "a nice boy" and is liked by "everybody," hopes to go there (p. 182). But it is taken over by the Austrian army, and Frederic and his party start their retreat. The reference to melting snow which follows this description of Caporetto intensifies the meaning of white as transiency or illusiveness.

. . . I felt the rain on my face turn to snow. The flakes were coming heavy and fast in the rain.

When daylight came the storm was still blowing but the snow had stopped. It had melted as it fell on the ground and now it was raining again. There was another attack just after daylight but it was unsuccessful (p. 186).

This passage is followed by the description of the Austrians breaking through toward Caporetto.

This melting-snow scene near Caporetto is a foreshadowing of the Montreux thaw, which later on in the novel causes Frederic and Catherine to retreat from the mountain to go to the hospital in Lausanne. Also the bombardment at Caporetto, it should be noted, started at "three o'clock in the morning with "the rain coming in sheets" (p. 186). One remembers that Frederic awakes one morning in Lausanne "about three o'clock hearing Catherine stirring in the bed" from labor pains and shortly Catherine is in the hospital "lying on a table, covered by a sheet" (pp. 312; 316). Caporetto, then, is a parallel to the Montreux-Lausanne episodes in terms of whiteness which conveys a sense of illusiveness and transiency.

At first life in the snows near Montreux is idyllic and seems destined to go on forever. But Frederic's and Catherine's life on the Swiss mountain-side is very short, lasting but two months, January and February. The snow is doomed to melt.

We had a fine life. We lived through the months of January and February and the winter was very fine and we were very happy. There

had been short thaws when the wind blew warm and the snow softened and the air felt like spring, but always the clear hard cold had come again and the winter had returned. In March came the first break in the winter. In the night it started raining. It rained on all morning and turned the snow to slush and made the mountain-side dismal (p. 306).

One of the significant features of snowfall in A Farewell to Arms is that it covers the ugliness of the war equipment and terminates the fighting in the mountains, but only temporarily and partially. Early in the novel, in the second chapter, there is the first snowfall in Gorizia. The snow slants across the wind; the bare ground is covered by snow; although the stumps of trees projected, the guns are covered. Watching the snow falling, Frederic thinks that the fighting is over in the mountains up the river that year. "That was all left for next year" (p. 6).

The function of the local anaesthetic ("snow"), which the doctor in the Milan hospital used on Frederic, illustrates the characteristic feature of the real snow in the novel. That is to say, Hemingway uses snow to convey the idea of a temporary and partial surcease.

He took out a number of small steel splinters from my thighs with delicate and refined distaste. He used a local anaesthetic called something or other "snow," which froze the tissue and avoided pain until the probe, the scalpel or the forceps got below the frozen portion (p. 94).

The snow-covered mountains in A Farewell to Arms serve in a similar way. They serve as a place of refuge, but one that is only temporary and partial. In consequence their whiteness conveys illusiveness or deceptiveness. The Hemingway "mountain" should not be viewed separately, however, but in relationship to the "plain." The following passage epitomizes this perspective. The snowy mountain is viewed along with the lake and the plain in a panoramic scope.

There was an island with two trees on the lake and the trees looked like the double sails of a fishing-boat. The mountains were sharp

and steep on the other side of the lake and down at the end of the lake was the plain of the Rhone Valley flat between the two ranges of mountains; and up the valley where the mountains cut it off was the Dent du Midi. It was a high snowy mountain and it dominated the valley but it was so far away that it did not make a shadow (p. 290).

The snowy mountain is linked with the plain and the lake. It does not make a shadow because it is so far away. That implies that if the mountain were closer it would have a shadow. (Hemingway uses the idea of something without a shadow as his highest evaluation. We see an example in Death in the Afternoon where the best bullfighter is likened to "a man without a shadow.")²¹ The whiteness of the snowy mountain conveys serenity, but it is unattainable, "so far away." In other words, the whiteness is again deceptive.

In the above-quoted passage, there is also a projection of Frederic's and Catherine's "separate peace" in the Swiss Alps. The two trees on an island on the lake figuratively refer to Frederic and Catherine, and their attempt to isolate themselves from the war on the plains. The island that suggests their home looks like a fishing boat, which conveys the notion of instability and movement.

White, then, as a projection of the snowy mountain, symbolizes serenity, something distant and dear, but unattainable; it is the color of the refuge one yearns for but, as it turns out, the refuge is illusive or deceptive.

Associated with images of the snowy mountain is Abruzzi, the priest's homeland, "the place where the roads were frozen and hard as iron, where it was clear cold and dry and the snow was dry and powdery . . ." (p. 13). It is the place that Frederic had wanted to go, but could not. He "winefully" explains to the priest "how we did not do the things we wanted to do; we never did such things" (p. 13). On the other hand, Abruzzi is linked with Gorizia, where Frederic and the priest are stationed at the beginning of the novel. The priest is doomed to leave his homeland, where religion is "not a dirty joke"

(p. 71), for Gorizia, and to wear an army uniform.

Another significant aspect of snow-falls in A Farewell to Arms associates the color white with limited vision, a closed world, and inactivity.

Snow did not come until three days before Christmas. We woke one morning and it was snowing. We stayed in bed with the fire roaring in the stove and watched the snow fall. . . . It was a big snow storm. . . . I went to the window and looked out but could not see across the road. It was blowing and snowing wild. I went back to bed and we lay and talked.

.
We went out in the snow but it was drifted so that we could not walk far. . . . The snow was blowing so we could hardly see and we went into the little inn by the station and swept each other off with a broom and sat on a bench and had vermouths (p. 296).

This description of a Swiss snowfall reveals figuratively the other dimension of the "white," peaceful, invulnerable life which is far away from the lust and carnage of the blood-stained world. But in this white world Frederic becomes inactive, (he is forced to take up boxing for exercise), restless, and even sleepless. Besides, he is not quite free from the war. "Looking out the window at the snow coming down," Catherine talks to Frederic:

". . . I thought maybe you were restless."
"No. Sometimes I wonder about the front and about people I know but I don't worry. I don't think about much."
"Who do you wonder about?"
"About Rinaldi and the priest and lots of people I know but I don't think about them much. I don't want to think about the war. I'm through with it" (p. 248).

The escape from the war and from the whole of society has failed to bring them real peace. A "separate peace" is unattainable in the whiteness of the Swiss Alps.

There are many other references to white in A Farewell to Arms. The Cathedral in Milan is "white and wet in the mist" when Frederic and Catherine see it in the night. Frederic would like to enter, but Catherine says no. On the other hand, it shelters, in its "shadow," a soldier and his girl, an image of wartime seduction. "'I wish they had some place to go,'" says Frederic

"Everybody ought to have some place to go." Catherine's response--"They have the cathedral."--implies that this white refuge is not for Frederic and for herself (p. 147). Another deceptive, unattainable shelter.

Count Greffi has "white hair and mustache" (p. 254), his whiteness a reminder of his old age (he is ninety-four) and his fragility (he is "chalky"). His whiteness is also deceptive. He confesses that the wisdom of old men is "the great fallacy." "They do not grow wise; they grow careful" (pp. 254; 261).

"The tops of the white-caps" on the lake are fleeting. Upon landing on the shore of Switzerland, Frederic and Catherine watch them "going away" "up the lake" (p. 276). When Frederic puts on his "white gown" in the hospital and peers at his reflection in the glass, he looks "like a fake doctor with a beard" (p. 319). And the Saint Anthony "in a little white metal capsule," which Catherine has given to Frederic, is lost when he is wounded by the shell burst (p. 43). All these examples convey, more or less, transiency or deceptiveness, as well as the benevolent meanings of white.

There are still other uses of white in the novel. Frederic and Catherine, for example, prefer to drink capri bianca or white capri, which they share both in Milan and in Lausanne. To drink it is like a ritual for them. "We drank dry white capri iced in a bucket; although we tried many of the other wines, fresa, barbera and the sweet white wines" (p. 112). Catherine says, "It won't hurt me. Maybe we can get some of our old white capri" (p. 309). The white capri conveys a clean spiritual love. It is contrasted to red wine, which conveys lust.

Similarly the Milan hotel was furnished with red plush, whereas the Lausanne hotel with the white washbowls" (p. 308).

The color white in A Farewell to Arms mostly connotes illusiveness, transiency, and deceptiveness. The color appears most often in connection with

snow, which affords a partial and temporary covering of ugliness, a temporary surcease from war and pain, and a temporary isolation from the world. But, as Frederic and Catherine soon discover, the snow quickly melts, and then the ugliness and pain returns, the fighting resumes, and the dark world of reality intrudes. An understanding of Hemingway's complex and symbolic use of the color white greatly helps one to understand his vision of life.²²

Hemingway's use of color in A Farewell to Arms is both realistic and symbolic. His realistic use of color contributes significantly to the novel's dramatic inevitability and symbolic foreshadowing. Leon Edel, I believe, is wrong when he says in his article "The Art of Evasion," that Hemingway's style is "mannerism," "artifice," and "not organic."²³ Nor is Carlos Baker quite right when he sets up what E. M. Halliday has criticized as "the artificially rigid and unrealistic contrast between the Mountain and the Plain."²⁴ I do not quite agree with either Baker or Halliday because they do not go beyond viewing the mountain metaphor as deepening the thematic contrast between war and not-war. My assertion is that we should view the mountain image in connection with the plain image. In other words, we should get the meaning of a color in its sequence. "The real thing," as Hemingway says in Death in the Afternoon, is "the sequence of motion and fact which made the emotion."²⁵ When a single color or pattern of color is viewed in its sequence, then and only then does it help to convey Hemingway's vision of life. If Carlos Baker had made a careful study of Hemingway's use of color in its sequence, the color white, for instance, he would have had to seriously qualify his generalization that the controlling symbolism of A Farewell to Arms is "the deep central antithesis between the image of life and home (the mountain) and the image of war and death (the

plain)."26

The colors gray, black, red, and white provided Hemingway with an effective means not only for developing the symbolic and dramatic content, but also for achieving unity. His use of color enriches the thematic content and the dramatic unity of the novel, and gives further proof why A Farewell to Arms, hailed by many as Hemingway's best work, deserves acclaim as an artistic success.

NOTES

¹Carlos Baker, Hemingway and His Critics (New York, 1967), p. 27.

²Ernest Hemingway, A Moveable Feast (New York, 1965), p. 13; Philip Young, Ernest Hemingway: A Reconsideration (New York, 1966), p. 185.

³Robert L. Lair, "Hemingway and Cézanne: An Indebtedness," Modern Fiction Studies, VI (Summer 1960), 165-168; James Thrall Soby, "Hemingway and Painting," Saturday Review, XXXVII (Dec. 4, 1954), 60-61.

⁴L. Moffitt Cecil, "The Color of A Farewell to Arms," Research Studies, XXXVI (June 1968), 168-173.

⁵Charles A. Fenton, The Apprenticeship of Ernest Hemingway (New York, 1961), p. 37.

⁶Baker, Ernest Hemingway: A Life Story (New York, 1969), p. 132; Constance Cappel Montgomery, Hemingway in Michigan (New York, 1966), p. 144; Young, p. 185.

⁷Hemingway, A Moveable Feast, p. 13.

⁸Baker, A Life Story, p. 132.

⁹Hemingway, Death in the Afternoon (New York, 1960), p. 205.

¹⁰Hemingway, A Farewell to Arms (New York, 1957), p. 4. Hereafter all page references are to this edition, cited parenthetically in the text. All italics used in the quotations from A Farewell to Arms are mine.

¹¹Hemingway's use of the color gray in his other works is consistent with his use in A Farewell to Arms. For instance, in "The Short Happy Life of Frances Macomber," Macomber goes hunting with Wilson "in the gray daylight." He is doomed to death that morning. (The Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway [New York, 1953], p. 25)

In For Whom the Bell Tolls, when Robert Jordan worries about what Pablo's woman might have read in his palm, he looks up at the gray sky and senses his doom:

The Hell with you, Robert Jordan thought. But he kept his mouth shut. While they had spoken the sun had clouded over and as he looked back up toward the mountains the sky was now heavy and gray.

"Sure," Pilar said to him, looking at the sky. "It will snow."

.

Robert Jordan looked up at the thick gray of the sky with the sun gone faintly yellow, and now as he watched gone completely and the gray becoming uniform so that it was soft and heavy; the gray now cutting off the tops of the mountains.

"Yes," he said. "I guess you are right." (For Whom the Bell Tolls [New York, 1940], p. 177)

¹²Hemingway, The Collected Poems (San Francisco, 1960), p. 21.

¹³Cecil, p. 171.

¹⁴Hemingway uses the color black consistently in his war novel. For example, in "A Clean Well-Lighted Place," black (darkness) reflects the despair of the old man and the old waiter. And the violence and death in "Indian Camp" are foreshadowed by the journey through the black night across the lake.

¹⁵Cecil, p. 170.

¹⁶E. M. Halliday, "Hemingway's Ambiguity: Symbolism and Irony," in A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Robert P. Weeks (Englewood Cliffs, N. J., 1962), p. 71.

¹⁷Hemingway also uses the color red consistently in his fiction. For example, in "Up in Michigan," "the blacksmith shop was painted red. . . ." The red betokens lust, thus foreshadowing the blacksmith's seduction of Liz (The Short Stories, p. 82).

Violence and death are also conveyed by the combination of red and black. In "The Undefeated" the scene unfolds: "Far out across the sand Manuel and Zurito saw the shine of the pumping flow of blood smooth against the black of the bull's shoulder" (The Short Stories, p. 251).

¹⁸Baker, The Writer As Artist, p. 95.

¹⁹Cecil, p. 171.

²⁰Baker, The Writer As Artist, p. 102.

²¹Death in the Afternoon, p. 15.

²²Hemingway's use of white in his other fiction is also similar to his use of it in A Farewell to Arms. The snow in "An Alpine Idyll," for example, serves as a temporary covering of ugliness. With the coming of spring and the melting of snow, the ugliness of human action is exposed to daylight.

²³Leon Edel, "The Art of Evasion," in A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Robert P. Weeks, p. 169.

²⁴Halliday, p. 71.

²⁵Death in the Afternoon, p. 2.

²⁶Baker, The Writer As Artist, p. 109.

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THE DOMINANT COLORS IN A FAREWELL TO ARMS

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AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S REPORT

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of English

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY

Manhattan, Kansas

1971

The four major colors employed by Ernest Hemingway in A Farewell to Arms are gray, black, red, and white. They are not mere surface tints but projections of the "concrete" images such as darkness, night, rain, blood, and snow. Hemingway did not content himself with surface realism; he carefully selected and stressed colors which the reader most readily associates with the natural setting, objects, and characters in the story but which, at the same time, convey the author's carefully conceived and executed dramatic and symbolic effect.

Gray is the background hue that symbolizes disaster and death; it also serves as a harbinger to direct the characters toward their dooms. Black, a symbol of death, intensifies the effect of gray. Red is a symbol of lust, violence, and death. It is contrasted to white, which symbolizes peace and love as well as illusiveness, transiency, and death. The proportionate combination of the four dominant colors in the novel epitomizes the gray modern world plagued by red warfare, a world in which man yearns for peace and love, but finds that these white hopes are illusive, stained with red, destined to fade into gray, and then be blotted out by black.

The colors gray, black, red, and white provided Hemingway with an effective means for enriching the thematic content and dramatic unity of the novel. His skillful use of color gives further proof why A Farewell to Arms, hailed by many as Hemingway's best work, deserves acclaim as an artistic success.