

**"Onward, Christian Soldiers": A Study of the Role of
Religion in Death of a Hero, A Farewell to Arms, and
Generals Die in Bed**

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By

David M. Poloniato

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AUTHOR: David M. Poloniato, Hons. B.A.
(McMaster University)

SUPERVISOR: Professor Alan Bishop

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FOREWORD

In the years 1929 and 1930, a plethora of 'anti-war' novels was published. Three such novels were Richard Aldington's Death of a Hero, Ernest Hemingway's A Farewell to Arms, and Charles Yale Harrison's Generals Die in Bed.

In 1916, Aldington enlisted in the British Army as a private, saw active combat, and emerged from the war with a captain's commission. Death of a Hero, which is based on Aldington's war experience, was published in 1929, and achieved immense popular success. It appeared at a point in Aldington's career when he was already well known and highly regarded as a poet and critic. The novel stands as an important historical as well as literary document, and has been favourably and justifiably compared with Erich Remarque's All Quiet on the Western Front, and with Ernest Hemingway's A Farewell to Arms.

A Farewell to Arms was published in 1929, and in that year became the best selling novel in America. It is Hemingway's second novel, and many critics regard it as his best work. Originally intended

to be a short story, its completed first draft ran to 650 manuscript pages. The novel is based on Hemingway's experiences in Italy during the First World War, in which he served as a Red Cross ambulance driver on the Italian front, and was wounded by an Austrian trench mortar on July 8, 1918.

Charles Yale Harrison was a private in the Canadian Army, and fought in France and Belgium with the Royal Montreal Regiment until he was wounded during the Battle of Amiens on August 8, 1918.

Generals Die in Bed was published in 1930 in England, after being rejected by several American publishers. However, it received international acclaim; a Spanish edition appeared in 1930 and French and Russian translations were released in 1931.

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INTRODUCTION

The First World War, as its name suggests, was unique in many ways. Never before had such massive armies been mobilized, never before had the world witnessed a fully mechanized war, and never before had so many men died in battle. However, despite the brutality of trench warfare and the descriptions of it by soldiers on leave from the front, the Generals of the Entente and Central Powers were "given virtually unlimited manpower" (Cooperman 61). There was, at least for the first two years of the war, an abundance of eager volunteers: some sought adventure and relief from the boredom of civilian life, others viewed the war as a means of employment in a struggling economy, while many entertained the idea of heroically defending one's country from the threat of enemy attack.

However, the most effective means of recruitment, which undoubtedly underlies the entire war effort, was the use of religious and political propaganda. Although the use of propaganda is as old as war itself, never before had it been employed as widely and effectively as it

was in the First World War. Through the use of newspapers, telegrams, popular literature and censorship, the allied propaganda machine controlled and manipulated public opinion. Governments of all nations involved in the war, especially those of the Entente, attempted to mould public opinion, both at home and abroad (Cooperman 15). For example, from the very onset of the war, Britain quickly obtained control over the major avenues of news circulation that were used to influence American opinion. The only cable line from Germany to the United States was immediately cut by the British government. Consequently, the British had greater control than the Germans over the information that reached, and failed to reach, the United States. As Ray Abrams suggests,

the practice of searching the mails, the censorship of news at the source as well as in transit as authorized by the Defense of the Realm Act, or "Dora", gave the British practical control of all news that came to America (16).

Hence, incidents like the sinking of the Lusitania, which was a crucial factor in the United States entering the war, could be manipulated and circulated as British propagandists saw fit.

Although the German leaders also attempted to control public opinion "they were most inept at propaganda" (Viereck 118). A German

Information Bureau was established, an agency designed to develop and spread propaganda, but it proved to be ineffective against the better developed British tactics. Professor Harold D. Lasswell points out that

The Germans were never able to popularize so striking an epithet as "Hun" or "Boche" and their clumsy exhortations to hate or their sneering references to the "Allies" were much less powerful and invidious (199).

A major reason for the extreme effectiveness of allied propaganda was that in it, unlike the propaganda of the Germans, religion played a very important role. Through the use of religious rhetoric, propagandists were able to arouse intense feelings of hatred towards the "Hun". In fact,

Not since the days of the crusades and religious wars did the ministers of western civilization demand, with such enthusiasm, killing for the greater glory of God and justice (Cooperman 22).

Indeed, the war became a 'holy crusade' against the 'powers of darkness', and the church was instrumental in elevating the war to a moral and idealistic level. According to Entente clergymen, it was not

merely a territorial and political conflict but the ultimate battle of good versus evil. The Bishop of London prompted young English soldiers to

“Kill Germans — to kill them, not for the sake of killing, but to save the world As I have said a thousand times, I look upon it as a war for purity, I look upon everyone who dies in it as a martyr” (Bainton 207).

Across the Atlantic, the Reverend Randolph H. Mikim proclaimed from his church in Washington that

“It is God who has summoned us to this war. Yes, it is Christ, the King of Righteousness, who calls us to grapple in deadly strife with this unholy and blasphemous power [Germany]” (McKim 116-117).

Samuel McCrea Cavert, assistant secretary of the War-time Commission of the Churches, declared that

“the ultimate issues of the war are moral and religious it is rapidly becoming clearer every day that it is now developed into a conflict between forces that make for the coming of the Kingdom of God and forces that oppose it” (Abrams 57).

Clearly, religious rhetoric presented the Germans as the “blasphemous power” in opposition to the “Kingdom of God”.

Inevitably, then, the Allied soldiers became the enforcers and protectors of truth and justice. Good versus evil, virtue versus vice, civilization versus chaos — these dichotomies were continually reinforced by reports of apparent atrocities committed by the enemy. Post-war novels are littered with instances where officers report to their men, usually using very rhetorical language, the atrocities of the enemy. For example, in Mattock, before the soldiers go “over the top” an officer invites his men to

“Remember that the Boche is the worst devil let loose on the world! Remember the girls he raped and the babies he butchered in Belgium! Remember his submarines and his devilish slaughter of innocent women and children on peaceful ships” (Stevens 96).

In Generals Die in Bed the Brigadier-General tells his men to “remember the Lusitania, an enemy like the Hun does not merit humane treatment in war”(Harrison 247). Using reports of the enemy’s alleged war crimes, religious propagandists seemed to have legitimate evidence of German barbarity: who but the ‘evil Hun’ could sink a hospital ship, or crucify allied soldiers against barn doors? Indeed, the war did appear to

be the ultimate battle, the 'holiest of crusades' against the 'powers of darkness'.

Since the war was presented in such idealistic terms, it naturally follows that death, an inevitable part of war, be presented as the ultimate sacrifice for God and country. Clergymen had to assure the mothers and father of the fighting men that

"they who offer up their lives for a high ideal of justice and humanity walk side by side with the world's Saviour and King" (Stires 9).

The idea of death, as presented by the church, became a truly glorious and heroic act: men were giving their lives to protect their religion and country from the enemy. Although death in battle has traditionally been presented as a heroic act, the degree of honour and glory associated with dying in combat was, in the First World War, elevated to an unprecedented level:

"I want every American mother who has a son at the front to feel that the precious gift she has given to the nation has been offered not upon the alter of Moloch but upon the altar of Christ and of the sacred duty which every man owes to mankind" (Rihbany 8-9).

Death became a 'sacred sacrifice' for a 'sacred cause'.

It is important to note that patriotism and religion became very closely associated, so that there came to be no dividing line between the two. The flag became synonymous with the cross, patriotic songs with hymns, and the sacrifice of Christ with the death of allied soldiers (Abrams Intro xvii). Clergymen from virtually all denominations declared that the state had the full and unconditional support of the church under the common cause of the 'holy crusade'. The rector of St. Paul's Episcopal Church summed up popular opinion when he claimed that

"The church will be loyal, not only by word from the pulpit, but in the sending forth of her sons as in past days, a sacrifice upon the alter of the nation... Patriotism may be an old-fashioned sentiment; nevertheless, the three great words in our language are God and Home and Country" (Abrams 52).

Although God and country have nearly always been closely associated, never before had the church become so involved in the political acts of the state. In fact, the church seemed to find new life and vigour in the war effort. Often, clergymen would do much more than the government asked of them. For example, many churches became recruiting stations

and religious influence was invaluable in the promoting and selling of Liberty Bonds: Liberty Loan Sundays were announced by the U.S. government, and clergymen convinced their congregations to “buy to the limit” (Abrams 85).

The promoting of the war was an effective weapon in the allied arsenal. It created an atmosphere that glorified the war and praised the Allied combatant. Religious rhetoric presented the war as a proving ground for the young soldiers; an initiation into manhood, a opportunity to be a hero to one's comrades and one's country. It seems that, for clergymen, “their idealism was real enough, whether or not provoked by opinion campaigns” (Cooperman 44). And judging by the massive numbers of recruits, citizens also believed in the idealism associated with the war.

It is essential that one remember the religious, political and social atmosphere that potential volunteers were subjected to, and surrounded by. Whether it be George Winterbourne of Death of a Hero, who succumbs to social pressure, Frederic Henry of A Farewell to Arms, who seeks adventure, or the narrator of Generals Die in Bed, who wishes to serve his country, the idealism associated with war is a very influential motivating factor in promoting recruitment. Many soldiers

believed they were going to save civilization from the “teutonic beasts”, but found the reality of the war to be a very different thing.

CHAPTER ONE

Death of a Hero

Richard Aldington's novel Death of a Hero deals with the life and probable suicide of a young British soldier, George Winterbourne. The narrator, who befriends George while they are serving together on the Western front, tells the story of a man caught in the insanity of a world at war — a war which he can neither understand nor tolerate, but feels obligated to participate in.

However, the reasons influencing George to enlist are somewhat ambiguous. It is clear that George "did not believe in the alleged causes for which the war was fought" (Aldington 220). In fact, before the outbreak of war he declares his neutrality in the matter: "'Oh, I'm a neutral' said George, laughing, 'don't count on me'" (Aldington 221).

Moreover, the religious rhetoric associated with the war effort does not seem to motivate George into participating in the war, since he

appears to be an atheist. He confesses to his lover Elizabeth that he has no use whatsoever for orthodox religion:

“What I cannot endure is Christianity and the harm it has done Europe - I detest its system of values, its persecution, its hatred of life ...”
(Aldington 138).

Similarly, when George first joins the army and an N.C.O. asks him to declare his official religion, George, who went to a Catholic school, claims that he doesn't have one: “I haven't any official religion. You'd better put me down as a rationalist” (Aldington 248).

In fact, even as a child, George rebelled against the religious and political values of his society. He resisted the traditions of his Catholic school by refusing to undergo the usual six months military training in the O.T.C.: “he somehow didn't want to learn how to kill and be a thoroughly manly fellow” (Aldington 77). He rejected the “code” put before him, which set out to produce “a type of thoroughly manly fellow” (Aldington 77). He refused to be a “bit of any damned Empire's backbone, still less part of its kicked backside” (Aldington 81). Although George's unorthodox behaviour brought him innumerable hardships, he stubbornly refused to conform, leaving the Head Master to

conclude that the only salvation for George was to “pray to God that he will have mercy upon him,” and make him into “a really manly fellow” (Aldington 80).

Yet, despite his contempt for the Empire, and the Empire’s religion, when duty calls George does enlist. It seems he joins the army partly to escape a traumatic love triangle, and partly because he feels obliged to fulfil his duty as a British citizen. Even though George did not agree with the war,

He was always looking at things from “the point of view of the Country” and far more frequently from “the point of view of humanity”. This may have been a result of his Public School, kicked-backside-of-the-Empire training. I know he resisted it with commendable contempt and fury, but where so much pitch was flying about he could scarcely avoid some of it (Aldington 166).

George’s ostensible hatred for his country is undermined by the loyalty he expresses towards it. In short, he is, to a certain extent, a product of his “kicked-backside-of-the-Empire” upbringing.

George’s involuntary patriotism is further exemplified once he is in the army. He continually worries about competently fulfilling his duty as a soldier for the British Empire, which he seems to do very

well. So well, in fact, that he is commissioned , a position he reluctantly accepts, and then, to

his dismay, but also a certain amount of flattered vanity, he found himself immediately appointed as acting commander of B company (Aldington 379).

George takes his command very seriously, and becomes extremely concerned about the incompetence of his men. "For days and weeks he got scarcely any sleep and never once even took his boots off" (Aldington 382). He desperately attempts to fulfil his duty as a company commander, but because of circumstances beyond his control, he fails, or at least regards himself as a failure. The men in his battalion are "quite ignorant of trench warfare" (Aldington 379), they do preposterous things, like "abandon[ing] a Lewis Gun post to get their dinners" and "forget perpetually everything they were told" (Aldington 383). When George protests to his commanding officer, "he was told that he was incompetent and not fit to be a Lance-Corporal" (Aldington 384).

George's difficult situation "rent his mind to pieces and exhausted his body" (Aldington 385), until he "was a wrecked man, swept along in the swirling cataracts of the war" (Aldington 386). For George Winterbourne, who witnessed "all the decay of battle fields", the

“smashed bodies and human remains in an infernal cemetery”, the war seemed to represent “the whole world collapsing” about him (Aldington 234).

Although George did not strongly believe in the traditional values of his society, it is apparent that whatever faith or interest he may have had in humankind was completely shattered by the war. The enjoyment he once found in art is completely lost. Physically he is unable to draw or paint since “his hand, once as steady as the table itself, shook very slightly but perceptibly” (Aldington 365). Yet even if his body could have been controlled, he “watched his mind degenerating with horror, wondering if one day it would suddenly crumble away ...” (Aldington 301).

Likewise, due to the war George is unable to appreciate the literature he has once enjoyed. As a young man, he read his father’s books “with the energy of a fierce physical hunger” (Aldington 80); however, after spending time at the front,

He bought a couple of French books and tried to read — in vain. He found he was unable to concentrate his mind, and fell into a deeper depression (Aldington 273).

Again, while on leave George tries to read DeQuincy's Murder Considered as One of the Fine Arts, but he "had entirely forgotten the existence of that piece of macabre irony, and gazed stupidly at the large-type title" (Aldington 364).

George even found himself "subtly drifting apart" (Aldington 235) from his wife Fanny and his lover Elizabeth, who over the course of the war "acquired a sort of mythical and symbolical meaning for him". They represented "what hope and humanity he had left, in them alone civilization seemed to survive" (Aldington 234). Nevertheless, as the war continued, George felt himself to be "dully remote from them" (Aldington 257) until he could no longer communicate with them at all. His despair became progressively worse until he was void of all interest in society and his personal life, and left with only a "profound and cynical discouragement, a shrinking honour of the human race" (Aldington 340). No longer being able to cope with his situation, George commits virtual suicide:

He felt he was going mad and sprang to his feet.
The line of bullets smashed across his chest like a
savage steel whip (Aldington 392).

George is killed on the 4th of November 1918, "wrapped in a blanket and the Union Jack" because "no coffins were available" and lowered into his grave (Aldington 27). The Tommies at the funeral "were numbered, formed fours, right turned and marched away; and the officers strolled over to the mess for a drink" (Aldington 28).

For the narrator, the most important part of George's life is, ironically, his death, because it is "a symbol ... of the whole waste and torture of it [the war]" (Aldington 28). In fact, although the main plot is centered around the experiences of George Winterbourne, the emphasis in the novel seems to be more on depicting the fate of an entire generation, rather than the tragedy of one individual. The narrator continually interjects his opinions in the novel, and, using George as an all-inclusive example, makes sweeping generalizations about the war. What he says of George's fate — "The death of a hero! What mockery, what bloody cant. What sickening putrical cant"(Aldington 28) — seems, for the narrator, to hold true of all who died in the war. George's death is not portrayed as a heroic sacrifice for his God and country but, rather, as a useless, unheroic and insignificant event which is soon forgotten.

For example, his wife and mistress "cried a bit" (Aldington 21), but soon forget George. His father "left £5 for Masses for the repose of George" and "Father Slock said he would pray for George's soul" (Aldington 8). For his mother, George's death "almost immediately took an erotic form" (Aldington 11). She regards the demise of her only son as a justification for seducing one of her young admirers:

"But now he's gone" and somehow Mrs. Winterbourne's voice became so erotically suggestive that even the obtuse sheik noticed it (Aldington 12).

In "low mourning tones founded on the best tradition of sensational fiction" (Aldington 7), George's mother states that "'They've killed him, those vile, filthy foreigners'" (Aldington 7), while Sam Browne, Mrs. Winterbourne's lover, "stood to attention, saluted ... and said solemnly: 'A clean sportin' death, an *Englishman's* death!'" (Aldington 6). However, in the eyes of the narrator, George's death was not "clean", "sportin'" or appreciated:

I suppose Winterbourne's name does appear on some War Memorial ... and of course, he's got his neat ration of headstone in France. But that's about all (Aldington 4).

Furthermore, George's unheroic fate seems to be the norm rather than the exception in the novel. Whether it be Jenkins, "a boy of nineteen" who was blown to pieces, or the "quick-witted youth" who "was killed by a bullet as he climbed out of the communication trench with his first message" (Aldington 354), or even an entire "Division smashed to pieces", their deaths, like George's death, are depicted as "damnable stupid waste" (Aldington 28). And exposing the "damnable stupid waste" of the war is undoubtedly the author's major concern. In fact, the character of George Winterbourne is somewhat underdeveloped, and he seems to serve merely as a surrogate for the narrator as he systematically undermines the high ideals associated with the war effort.

For instance, the idea of death in battle was portrayed by the church and the state to be the ultimate heroic sacrifice for one's God and Country. As in previous wars, it was believed, or at least assumed, that the fighting would be very personal. That is, allied soldiers armed with sabres and pistols would engage the enemy face to face, and ultimately defeat them. However, as the author reveals, due to the mechanized nature of the war the fighting "was so impersonal as a rule" that

you did not see the man who fired the ceaseless
hails of shells on you, nor the machine gunners
who swept away twenty men to death in one zip
... (Aldington 265).

In fact, "even in the perpetual trench raids you only caught a glimpse of a few differently shaped steel helmets ..."; "hand-to-hand fighting occurred, but it was comparatively rare" (Aldington 266). Therefore, the nature of the war, as depicted by the narrator, leaves little opportunity for heroics, since most of the time combatants did not even see their enemies, let alone confront them face to face.

Moreover, the mechanized violence that the narrator and George are subjected to in the novel seems to be without purpose. In earlier wars, "the reason for fighting was immediately apparent to combatants ..., most of whom usually stood to gain directly if victorious" (Cooperman 22). However, George fails to see the significance of the battles he participates in. He does not feel that he is defending his country from the threatening attack of a hostile enemy. Instead, George finds himself attacking and subsequently defending seemingly insignificant places such as "Hill 91", or the "slag hill". When an enemy position is acquired, it is often lost shortly after being taken, with the loss of thousands of lives.

At one point in the novel, George walks "over the top of Hill 91", where probably nobody had been ... since its capture". He sees "a fleshless hand", "a gaping decaying boot", "a skeleton violently dismembered by a shell explosion", and he "stood in frozen silence and contemplated the last achievements of civilized man" (Aldington 386). George is unable to comprehend why so much death has occurred over a slag hill that is now forgotten.

Also, the narrator completely rejects the traditional idea of the war as "an exercise in manhood" (Cooperman 70) and an opportunity to distinguish oneself through combat. He claims that the war did not produce men who, because of their combat experiences, "had discovered their souls" (Stires 4). But rather, it had created "wrecked", "shell-shocked" individuals, like George Winterbourne and Lieutenant Evans, who, at least in the case of George Winterbourne, did not "discover their souls", but lost their will to live. And rather than distinguishing men through their conduct in battle, in most cases the war and the army seemed to altogether destroy the individuality of the soldiers in the novel. Indeed, the narrator claims that the army attempted to "eliminate feelings" so that it could produce "human robots" (Aldington 279). As

George discovers, the soldiers have no separate identity from one another, and their lives seem to be totally expendable:

Winterbourne heard them constantly using the phrase "three hundred thousand men", as if they were cows or pence or radishes (Aldington 376).

In fact, a British Staff Officer very effectively sums up the army's attitude toward the individual soldier:

"You are the war generation, you were born to fight this war, and it's got to be won. So far as you are concerned as individuals, it doesn't matter a tinker's damn whether you are killed or not" (Aldington 235).

Given the mechanized nature of the war and the established attitudes of those in command towards the individual soldier, distinguishing one's manhood on the battlefield becomes virtually impossible.

Similarly, the narrator seems to have a very different opinion about the alleged enemy than that of wartime propagandists. He claims that the Germans were not "Huns", "habitual baby-butchers", "rapers of women" or "crucifiers of prisoners", but on the contrary "one of the most civilized races in the world and "notorious during generations for their kindness" (Aldington 230). Moreover, the narrator suggests that

the allied soldiers “had no feeling of hatred for their enemies. In fact, they were almost sympathetic to them” (Aldington 265).

Instead of the Germans being the enemy, the narrator claims, it was, for “Germans and English alike”, the “fools who sent them to kill each other”(Aldington 269). The enemy were the “sneaks” who imposed “false ideals”, “unintelligent ideas”, “hypocrisy” and “stupidity” on the naive and the innocent (Aldington 263). He claims that the enemy were those who perpetrated religious rhetoric which led people like Mrs. Winterbourne to believe the British Empire “should continue the war as a holy crusade for the extermination of all filthy, vile foreigners” (Aldington 15). The narrator blames Victorian traditions for the war, traditions which caused men like Lieutenant Evans to believe that “What England did must be right, and England declared war on Germany. Therefore, Germany must be wrong” (Aldington 299). Evans is a man who

could be implicitly relied upon to lead a hopeless attack and to maintain a desperate defence to the very end. There were thousands and tens of thousands like him (Aldington 299).

The narrator blames propagandists for the war, and for continuing it by tricking civilians into believing that

our men are so splendid, so splendid, so unlike the Germans, you know. Haven't you found the Germans mean-spirited? They have to be chained to their machine-guns, you know (Aldington 362).

In fact, the narrator reduces the religious and political rhetoric of the war to what he calls "Cant, Delusion and Delirium". The war effort, he claims was "the tragic climax of Victorian Cant", which caused millions to die "for a blast of wind, a blather, a humbug, a newspaper stunt, a politician's ramp" (Aldington 207).

Given the narrator's attitude toward the war, it logically follows that he regards orthodox religion (which played such a vital role in the war effort) with a great deal of contempt. He describes Roman Catholicism as a "drivelling religiosity" characterized by "slimy Roman Catholics", "slimy religious tracts" and "slimy priest[s]" (Aldington 5).

Furthermore, when George is enlisting in the army and claims that he has no official religion, the N.C.O. in charge becomes enraged, and the narrator claims that "In his zeal for religion he got Winterbourne sent on all the dirtiest and longest Sunday Fatigues ..."

(Aldington 20). The actions of the N.C.O. , as depicted by the narrator, are hardly those of a gentlemanly Christian Soldier. Ultimately, the narrator concludes that "There was ... no religious compulsion in the Army; that was why Church Parade was a parade" (Aldington 248).

Perhaps the incident which best reveals the author's attitude towards orthodox religion, occurs when George is wandering through a village street encumbered with "dead Germans", "smashed transports" and "contorted bodies of dead horses", and he finds a book, which is Pascal's Thoughts on Christianity. Essentially, this incident represents the central theme of the novel. George discovers the book in a "ruined village school", ((Aldington 389) which is, symbolically speaking, a contradiction in terms. Obviously, the children attending the school have been learning about Christianity, and how to love one's fellow human being, yet Christianity as an institution is partly responsible for the destruction of their school and country. This seemingly insignificant act is, for the narrator, is suggestive of the hypocrisy, irony and absurdity that surround the entire war effort. The Church, which claimed to represent peace and love, was during the war encouraging young men to "Kill Germans" as best they could, in order to ensure the freedom of their country.

After witnessing the horrors of the war, both George and the narrator became totally disillusioned with the war and with humanity. Before the war, George "always unconsciously believed life was good"; however, after serving time at the front, "youth faded and in horror he faced the grey realities" (Aldington 275). George concludes that war marks the collapse of the "whole universe" (Aldington 232).

The narrator states that the war was not "an honest affair for any participant" (Aldington 228). Instead, it was based on deception; hence "this preposterous bolstering up of Cant" (Aldington 229). In fact, because the narrator feels that the war was based on "false ideals", which were promoted by "criminal rant"; he feels that "the whole world is blood-guilty" and that "somehow we must atone the dead, murdered, violently-dead soldiers" (Aldington 28). Writing the life of Winterbourne, and, consequently, depicting the realities of war seems to have been the author's attempt to speak on behalf of the soldiers who, he feels, died in vain.

CHAPTER TWO

A Farewell to Arms

One of the most popular novels to emerge out of the First World War was Ernest Hemingway's A Farewell to Arms. It has been attacked as an "unconvincing romance", but it has also been praised as a "masterful depiction of the impersonal cruelty of war" (Rovit 33). Nevertheless, whatever the novel may or may not be, most critics acknowledge that A Farewell to Arms, like Death of a Hero, is a nihilistic novel. This novel questions traditional moral and religious values. In an effort to avoid total despair, a fate George Winterbourne could not avoid, most of the characters in the novel "search for truth — for ethical standards to replace those which seemed impossible under the wartime conditions which it depicts" (West 28).

However, whether Hemingway's depiction of wartime conditions is accurate or not, or even if the war was his major concern in writing the novel, are legitimate questions, which are often asked. It is true that, at times, the war seems subordinate to the romantic adventure

of Frederic Henry and Catherine Barkley. In fact, from Chapter XXI to the conclusion, we hear very little, if anything at all, about the war. Although Frederic Henry reads about the war in the newspaper, his relationship with Catherine undoubtedly occupies centre stage in the novel.

Furthermore, although everyone's interpretation of any event is subject to his/her own biases and limitations, we generally agree that first-hand experience is the most credible. More specifically, we assume that war veterans have a more accurate and informed picture of the war — at least trench warfare — than civilians on the home front. Indeed, it seems that Aldington's novel testifies to this assumption.

The problem is that A Farewell to Arms spans the years 1915 to 1918, although Hemingway did not actually go to Italy until the spring of 1918, and, once there, served on a front which was totally different from the one on which Frederic Henry serves (Reynolds 5). Therefore, most of the action in the novel is not Hemingway's report of his actual war experiences, simply because he was not there at that time. One may wonder, then, if incidents and attitudes described in the novel, like the Caporetto retreat or the socialists' complaints about the war, are accurate or not. In other words, does the war, as some critics have

suggested, simply serve as a general setting for a “tragic romance”, like the Capulet/Montague feud in Shakespeare’s Romeo and Juliet? Is it simply there to unite and complicate the lives of these star-crossed lovers, or are they, like George Winterbourne, a product of it?

Michael Reynolds has written an entire book entitled Hemingway’s First War which is solely concerned with proving the validity of A Farewell to Arms as a realistic war novel. In it he convincingly illustrates the fact that Hemingway’s novel is extremely accurate and well researched. Not only are the geography and the weather conditions in the novel “perfectly accurate” but, more importantly, the attitudes of the soldiers towards the war are, as far as one can tell from historical accounts, remarkably true to life (Reynolds 7). For example, the socialist dismay about the war, which is represented by Piani and Bonello in the novel, is an “accurate reflection of the actual conditions in Italy in the fall of 1917” (Reynolds 107). And although Hemingway served for a very short time in Italy,

when he came to write of Frederic Henry, he was able to combine his own post-war cynicism with the war weariness he had seen among his fellow [ambulance] drivers (Reynolds 166).

and present a detailed account of the prevalent attitudes expressed by soldiers regarding the war.

Reynolds presents a very detailed study of Hemingway's novel, and after reading the book one cannot help but conclude that, although the novel does have certain romantic elements in it, for the most part Hemingway's presentation of the war and the implications thereof, is remarkably realistic. Having established the validity of A Farewell to Arms as a war novel, we can now direct our attention to its contents.

Hemingway's novel is in many ways fundamentally different from Death of a Hero. For instance, it is set on the Italian front, rather than the Western front, Frederic Henry serves behind the lines, while George Winterbourne served at the front, and where Aldington tends to be explicit in his comments on the war, Hemingway is very subtle.

However, the novels are also very much alike. In fact A Farewell to Arms seems to reflect many of the themes and opinions that we have seen in Death of a Hero; whether on the Italian front or the Western front, whether one was an ambulance driver or a subaltern, the war seemed to have had certain typical effects on those who participated in it.

For instance, the Catholic Priest from Abruzzi, who is the obvious representative of orthodox religion in the novel, is not taken seriously by his fellow soldiers. Although he is not called a “slimy priest” (as the narrator deems the Catholic priest in Death of a Hero), he is constantly ridiculed and ‘baited’ by the officers in his Battalion. In the opening pages of the novel, the Captain teases the priest and reduces his idealistic religion to physical vulgarity: “Priest not happy. Priest not happy without girls” (Hemingway 14). From the beginning the Captain establishes a pattern with regard to the treatment of the Priest, that the other officers, especially Rinaldi, continually draw upon.

Although the ‘baiting’ seems to be very light and gentle criticism, as the narrative progresses and the war becomes worse, the priest and what he represents seem to be viewed in an increasingly contemptuous way. Rinaldi, who becomes disillusioned with the war, airs his frustrations on the priest: “To hell with you, priest!” “To hell with the whole damn business” (Hemingway 174).

The priest himself sums up the opinion of the other men towards formal religion when he declares that after the war he

“will return to the Abruzzi. There in my country it is understood that a man may love God. It is not a dirty joke” (Hemingway 71).

The priest's comment is highly significant in that it represents a central theme in the novel. The “cold”, “clear” and “dry” country of Abruzzi adopts, as Robert Penn Warren suggests, “the shadowy symbolic significance of another kind of life, another view of the world” (Warren 466). It is a place where the priest may practise his ‘clear’, ‘dry’ religion, where everything is straightforward and there are no complications. Abruzzi is untouched by the horrors of war, and consequently formal religious values may suffice there. In Abruzzi, God does appear to be a God of love, concerned for the well-being of his creation. However, given the realities of the war — a war that is fully supported by the church — the idea of ‘loving God’ and, in fact, the entire concept of religion, become “a dirty joke.” For combatants who have witnessed the horrors of war, the priest's religion, the idea of love and sacrifice, become absurd.

However, as the war drags on and claims more lives, certain characters in the novel (such as Rinaldi and Catherine) seem to suffer the same mental breakdown as George Winterbourne, but the priest appears

to become stronger in his faith. As Frederic Henry could see, "the baiting did not touch him now" (Hemingway 173).

Yet even the priest, who is so firmly anchored in his beliefs seems, at one point in the novel, to question his faith. At first, he prays for victory, and when victory does not seem feasible "pray[s] that something will happen" (Hemingway 179); that the war will end. However, as his prayers continue to go unanswered, he becomes discouraged in his beliefs. He tells Frederic Henry that he does not "believe in victory any more," and since those who do not want war cannot stop it, the priest concludes, "it's hopeless" (Hemingway 71). Incidentally, our last encounter with the priest in the novel is when he is in this disillusioned state.

Rinaldi, like George Winterbourne, totally disregards traditional religious and moral values. He rejects the priest's idealistic love which you "wish to sacrifice for. You wish to serve" (Hemingway 72). Instead, Rinaldi relies on his work, sex and alcohol to provide him with some sort of meaning in his life. However, when these things are missing, he sinks into a deep despair. He reaches a psychological state similar to Winterbourne's, and he too becomes a "wrecked man, swept along in the swirling cataracts of the war" (Aldington 386). Finally,

Rinaldi concludes that, when his work does not occupy him, 'there's nothing else I tell you. Not a damned thing'" (Hemingway 174). In fact, Rinaldi, by his own declaration, seems to go a "little crazy" (Hemingway 174), much like George, who "felt he was going mad" (Aldington 392).

Catherine Barkley is another character in the novel who seems to reject traditional values, but is different from Rinaldi and George in that she apparently believed in them at one time. When Catherine is first introduced in the novel, we learn that her fiancé was killed on the Somme. His death seemed to change Catherine's view of the war:

"I remember having a silly idea he might come to the hospital where I was, with a saber cut I suppose, and a bandage around his head. Or shot through the shoulder. Something picturesque. He didn't have a saber cut. They blew him all to bits'" (Hemingway 20).

It is clear that before her fiancé was blown "all to bits", Catherine held a "picturesque", romanticized view of the war, where a soldier did his part in a 'holy crusade', encountering the enemy face to face in a heroic battle. However, her fiancé died violently and unheroically, like George

Winterbourne or Jenkins, "the boy of nineteen" who was also blown to pieces.

It is this realization of the true nature of the war that leads Catherine to believe that there is nothing after life but death, no deity or salvation: "he [her fiancé] was killed and that was the end of it. 'Oh, yes' she said 'that's the end of it'" (Hemingway 19). For Catherine, her fiancé's participation in the war and subsequent death did not prepare him to "walk side by side with the world's Saviour and King" (Stires 9), but his death was the ultimate "end of it". In fact, her fiancé's violent death and her disillusionment with the war seem to change Catherine into an atheist. She rebels against the values of formal religion, and claims "vice is a wonderful thing", and that she wishes she "could do something really sinful". (Hemingway 153). When they are discussing marriage she tells Frederic Henry that it means very little to her since she has no religious beliefs:

"You see, darling, it would mean everything to me if I had any religion. But I haven't any religion" (Hemingway 116).

However, in her relationship with Frederic Henry, Catherine seems to salvage some sort of meaning or hope in her life. She confesses

to Frederic Henry that "You're my religion" and she seems to be temporarily relieved from the despair she once felt. In fact, when Catherine first meets Frederic Henry she claims, like Rinaldi and George Winterbourne, that she is "a little crazy" (Hemingway 300). However, after developing a relationship with him she is "never that way any more", only "very, very, very happy" (Hemingway 300). Because of her relationship with Frederic Henry, Catherine seems able to deal with the war.

Yet, when Catherine is giving birth, and because of complications it is doubtful whether she will live, she remarks

"I'm not brave any more darling I'm all broken.
They've broken me. I know it. They just keep it
up till they break you." (Hemingway 323).

Undoubtedly, the "they" Catherine refers to is the same "they" that the narrator in Death of a Hero speaks of: "they didn't want to lose us but they thought we ought to go; they said our King and Country need us..." (Aldington 230). It is the same "they" that Rinaldi is desperately trying to escape from: "They try to get rid of me. Every night they try to get rid of me. I fight them off" (Hemingway 175). Although the "they" that these characters refer to is somewhat ambiguous, it is clear

"they" are associated with the war. It is the "they" that eventually, despite her temporary happiness with Frederic Henry, "break" Catherine Barkley. She dies in the same hopeless and desperate state of mind in which she had existed at the beginning of the novel, where life and death are regarded as "a dirty trick" (Hemingway 331).

Frederic Henry, much like George Winterbourne, does not appear to have much enthusiasm for the war effort. He is an American volunteer in an Italian ambulance corps, but seems to have joined the Italian Army simply because he "was in Italy" and "spoke Italian" (Hemingway 22).

Yet the mere fact that he volunteers implies that he must have felt some sort of empathy for the war, and in fact, he does seem sincerely concerned with winning it. When Passini, a fellow ambulance driver, states that "there is nothing worse than war", Frederic Henry suggests that "defeat is worse", because the enemy will "come after you, ... take your home, ... take your sisters" (Hemingway 90), Frederick Henry's opinion of the enemy is not unlike that of the wartime propagandists.

Furthermore, the Priest claims that Frederic Henry is "nearer the officers than ... to the men" (Hemingway 70), a statement that carries

several implications. Mainly, that officers are usually associated with those "who would make war" (Hemingway 70) and, despite the death and suffering caused by it, continue sending men to fight in it. It is doubtful that Frederic Henry falls into this category, but to some extent, as the Priest claims, he is "a patriot" (Hemingway 71).

Nevertheless, whatever thoughts Frederic Henry may have had about the war effort, it is clear that, by the conclusion of the novel, he has experienced the same loss of faith in humanity as George Winterbourne. Moreover, his disillusionment, like George's, is the product of several revelations about the nature of the war.

For instance, along with his fellow ambulance drivers, Frederic Henry is wounded while sitting in a dug-out. When Rinaldi asks him if he did "any heroic act?", he states he was "blown up" while he was "eating cheese" (Hemingway 63). Like the fate of Catherine's fiancé, this incident reinforces the idea that the tradition of heroism in battle was rendered absurd by the nature of the war. As Aldington remarks, "it was a war of missiles murderous and soul-shaking explosives" (Aldington 266).

Again, when a shop-keeper offers Frederic Henry the opportunity to buy a sword along with the pistol he has purchased, she

quickly retracts her offer when she discovers he is going to the front:

““Oh yes, then you won’t need a sword’ she said” (Hemingway 149).

Essentially, these episodes reflect the idealized, traditional view of war; a war of saber charges, and how different it is from the reality of trench warfare. Although in a far less direct way, Hemingway seems to present the same conclusions about the war as Aldington.

After witnessing the horrors of war, such as “seven thousand men” dying from cholera, Frederic Henry, like the narrator of Death of a Hero, concludes that he

had seen nothing sacred, and the things that were glorious had no glory and the sacrifices were like the stockyards at Chicago if nothing was done with the meat.... Abstract words such as glory, honour, courage, and hollow were obscene... (Hemingway 185).

Note that Frederic Henry uses the same cattle simile as George Winterbourne to describe the plight of the soldiers. Frederic Henry concludes that the war is not a holy crusade, that the deaths of the men are reduced to futile slaughter. Whereas the narrator of Death of a Hero called the rhetoric of the war ‘criminal rant’, Frederic Henry views it as

'abstract'. Although their terms are different, their ideas are very much the same.

As a result of his disillusionment, Frederic Henry searches for some sort of meaning to his life, and seems to find it in Catherine Barkley. He says that all he wanted was to see Catherine. What the narrator finds in telling the life of George Winterbourne, what George finds in Fanny and Elizabeth, Rinaldi in his work and the Priest in Abruzzi, is what Frederic Henry seems to find in Catherine. That is, some sort of escape from the war.

In fact, at the beginning of the novel, although Frederic Henry treats the Priest with respect, he clearly does not believe in his religion of "sacrifice" and "service". He does not go to Abruzzi, which, as we have seen, has symbolic significance in the novel. Instead he opts for the sensuality of the city;

when the room whirled and you needed to look at
the wall to make it stop, nights in bed, drunk,
when you knew that was all there was...
(Hemingway 13).

Yet, when he falls in love with Catherine, he moves closer to the Priest's ideals. He seems to find his own religion in his relationship

with Catherine, and because of this seems to understand the Priest better. After returning to duty from the hospital where he has fallen in love, Frederic Henry resists the priest-baiting, and he can now visit with the Priest instead of going to the town brothels.

However, the happiness that Frederic Henry has with Catherine is short lived, as she dies in childbirth and he returns to his state of disillusionment:

Now Catherine would die. 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 (Hemingway 327).

Frederic Henry is commenting on life — more precisely, life in the context of war — where “they threw you in” and inevitably “killed you”.

Directly after Frederic comments on the hopeless role of the individual who never “knows what it is about”, he remembers an incident when he

put a log on the top of the fire and it was full of ants. As it commenced to burn, the ants swarmed out and went first toward the centre where the fire

was, then turned back and ran toward the end. When there were enough on the end they fell off into the fire. Some got out, their bodies burnt and flattened, and went off not knowing where they were going. But most went toward the fire and then back toward the end and swarmed on the cool end and finally fell off into the fire. I remember thinking at the time that it was the end of the world and a splendid chance to be a messiah and lift the log off the fire and throw it out where the ants could get onto the ground. But I did not do anything but throw a tin cup of water on the log, so that I would have the cup empty to put whisky in before I added water to it. I think the cup of water on the burning log only steamed the ants (Hemingway 327).

The scene in which the ants are caught in the fire is undoubtedly a metaphor for those individuals, like Frederic Henry, who found themselves caught in the First World War. The ants, like George Winterbourne, believe their predicament to be the end of the world. They swarm from one end of the log to the other, failing to understand their situation, like those involved in the war. Some of the ants escape the fire, "their bodies burnt and flattened and went off not knowing where they were going". Likewise, some of those individuals that are trapped by war "get out", such as the narrator of Death of a Hero or Frederic Henry, but they too are wounded and bewildered by their experience. The narrator in Death of a Hero feels that he is

psychologically “poisoned” by the war and makes “a desperate effort to wipe off the blood-guiltiness” (Aldington 29). After the death of Catherine, Frederic Henry is left without hope or meaning in his life, and in this confounded state he “walked back to the hotel in the rain” (Hemingway 332).

However, most of the ants “fell into the fire” just as most of the characters involved in the war died in it. And what Frederic Henry says about the ants, that there is no “messiah”, is inevitably a parallel to those individuals involved in the war. Death, Frederic Henry claims, is the end of it, and religion (the messiah) offers no salvation from it. In fact, Frederic Henry (symbolizing the messiah) only adds further pain to the already suffering ants. Likewise, formal religious values only seem to aggravate the soldiers at the front, like the N.C.O. in Death of a Hero who, “In his zeal for religion”, got Winterbourne sent on “all the dirtiest and longest fatigues” (Aldington 20), or the Priest from Abruzzi, whose beliefs annoy his comrades. The only valid religion in A Farewell to Arms, is the all powerful, all encompassing religion of death.

CHAPTER THREE

Generals Die in Bed

In the previous chapter I touched on the idea that A Farewell to Arms is to some extent a “romantic novel”. The war, although carefully researched by Hemingway, is not always in the foreground of the story; and at times the romance of Frederic and Catherine is separated, at least geographically, from the destructive influence of the war. Moreover, Frederic Henry is never directly involved in trench warfare, which seems to encompass the worst conditions of the war, and is a dominant fact in many First World War novels. Even in Death of a Hero, which is so explicit in its comments on the war, much of the narrative is spent describing George’s life before the war. Consequently, the author dedicates a comparatively small amount of time to depicting George’s experiences in the trenches.

However, Charles Yale Harrison’s Generals Die in Bed is a novel that deals exclusively with the experiences of a frontline soldier. A private in the Canadian Army, Harrison tells his disturbing story of

the physical and psychological effects of trench warfare. The fact that Harrison served in the Canadian Army is significant because, as Aldington remarks, "the Canadians were easily the crack troops of the British armies, and were sent into all the hardest fighting" (Aldington 382). In the novel, Private Cleary reiterates this idea when he claims that the Canadians are "bloody shock-troops, that's what we are. Whenever the imperials cave in, up we go" (Harrison 102). Harrison, as a Canadian soldier, was subjected to some of the worst conditions of the war, and subsequently, the reader is presented with these harsh realities in the novel.

In Generals Die in Bed, Harrison presents a very simplistic picture of life in and around the trenches of the Western Front. The war is an ever present force in the novel, and in fact, it seems to develop a 'character' of its own. For instance, when the narrator is on 'rest' several miles behind the front lines, but can still hear "the rumble of the guns", he addresses the war as if it were a living thing:

not clear

In the distance the rumble of the guns is faint but persistent I am still here, it says. You may sleep quietly at night in sweet smelling hay, you may lie sweating under a tree after drill but I am here and you must come back to my howling

angry

madness, to my senseless fury. I am the link that binds you to your future, it mutters (Harrison 86).

愤怒 evil 邪恶 该 deal with

In fact, the war is portrayed as a sort of diabolical deity that manipulates and controls the fate of those involved in it. The narrator wonders how he will

* 能够 邪恶

ever be able to go back to peaceful ways again and hear pallid preachers ^{cry}whimper of their puny little gods who can only torment sinners with sulphur, we, who have seen a hell that no God, however cruel, would fashion for his most deadly enemies? (Harrison 101).

Indeed, the war, as presented by the narrator, is nothing short of "hell", where the traditional values and high ideals of wartime rhetoric do not apply.

For instance, as in Death of a Hero and A Farewell to Arms, death is not depicted as a heroic sacrifice for one's country. Most of the soldiers who die in the novel are killed while cowering in the bottom of a trench, or taking shelter in a dug-out that is hit by a shell. Like Frederic Henry, who was blown up while eating cheese, Private Cleary is shot while dividing up the breakfast rations. Broadbent is hit by a shell fragment, and dies at the bottom of a crater with one leg dangling

by a thread of skin. He dies "like a little boy too — weeping, calling for his mother" (Harrison 265). Death it seems, could not be more inglorious or unheroic than as depicted in Generals Die in Bed. In fact, Harrison uses the familiar "cattle" imagery to describe the soldiers going to the front: "we are tossed about like quarters of beef on the way to market" (Harrison 219). Again, when the narrator is on leave and the food is better than usual, he states that "Our food has been too good. We are getting ^{养肥} fattened for the ^{屠杀} slaughter" (Harrison 84). The battles that occur in the novel seem to be fought in vain, as Private Fry remarks, "First we [Canadians] take one of their lousy trenches and they [Germans] take it back. It's a bloody game of see-saw" (Harrison 234). He, like George Winterbourne, discovers that the battles of the war never seem to change anything, they only take more lives.

Similarly, in Generals Die in Bed, as in the novels I discussed earlier, soldiering is not portrayed as an "exercise in manhood" (Cooperman 70). There seems to be very little opportunity for individual soldiers to accomplish heroic acts. Harrison, like Aldington, claims that because of "A thousand thundering orders", and "a thousand ^{not important} trivial rules" men are reduced to "will-less robots" (Harrison 56), no more in control of their lives than ^{teenagers} "the stripling Isaac whom the ^{white hair} hoary, senile _{老人性的}

Abraham led to the sacrificial block ...” (Harrison 13). Soldiering is not depicted as a heroic, self sacrificing occupation, but rather, “soldiering means ... saving your skin and getting a bellyful as often as possible ... That and nothing else” (Harrison 91).

Indeed, “saving one’s skin” seems to be the primary objective of each combatant in the novel. Where Aldington claims that “Friendships between soldiers during the war were a real ... and unique relationship” (Aldington 23), Harrison claims that at the frontline “Camaraderie — esprit de corps — good fellowship” were “words for journalists to use, not for us. Here in the line they do not exist” (Harrison 91).

In the actual theatre of war, as portrayed by Harrison, it does seem to be every man for himself, as the narrator leaves his wounded comrade behind to ensure his own safety:

As I pass him he entwines my legs with his hands.
 "Save me," he screams into my face.
 Don't leave me here alone."
 I shake him off and run towards
 the woods with Broadbent (Harrison 201).

Nevertheless, Harrison does express the same sentiments about the enemy as those presented in Death of A Hero. The Germans

are seldom regarded as the enemy; instead, the narrator says that the "enemies are — the lice, some of our officers and death". When finally meeting a German soldier face to face, the narrator describes him as having a "boyish face, like a Saxon; he is fair and under the light I see white down against green cheeks" (Harrison 114). This description is very different than the rhetoric which portrayed Germans as "teutonic beasts" (Cooperman 13), the same rhetoric that the brigadier-general in the novel draws upon to create feelings of hatred in his men towards the Germans, when he describes the ^{表情的} apparent ^{angry} atrocity of the Llandovery ^{未开化 野蛮的} Castle: "' No instance of barbarism in the world's history can equal the sinking of this hospital ship'. The general claims that "an enemy like the Germans — no, I will not call him German — an enemy like the Hun does not merit humane treatment in war'" (Harrison 245-246). After ^{报仇} avenging the Llandovery Castle by slaughtering unarmed Germans, the ^{kill} narrator ironically discovers that it "was carrying supplies and war material" (Harrison 268).

It is incidents like the Llandovery Castle, the ^{compare} confrontation with the "Saxon-like" German, and the ^{useless} futile death of his comrades, that cause the narrator to completely reject the traditional values of his

society. When he is subjected to heavy shelling by German guns, he begins to pray:

"God — God — please ..."
 I remember that I don't believe in God. Insane thoughts race through my brain. I want to catch hold of something, something that will explain this mad fury, this maniacal congealed hatred that pours down on our heads. I can find nothing to console me, nothing to appease my terror. I know that hundreds of men are standing a mile or two from me pulling gun - lanyards, blowing us to smithereens. I know that and nothing else"
 (Harrison 26-27).

As the above passage reveals, the narrator finds no consolation in the formal religion of the so-called 'civilized world'. The idea of being a "Christian soldier" fighting in the "holy crusade" does not console him or explain the "mad fury that pours down on his head".

As the novel progresses, formal religion not only fails to console the combatants, but the idea of a deity changes from a God of indifference to one motivated by vengeance, cruelty and hatred. In the middle of an enemy attack, Anderson, a Methodist lay preacher in civilian life, begins to pray for God's pity: "'O Lord, look down upon me in Thine infinite pity'" (Harrison 194). Broadbent, a fellow soldier, hears his plea for mercy and replies, "'for the Lord's sake Anderson,

don't tell God where you are or we'll all get killed. Stop whining'" (Harrison 194). Rather than being the protecting and loving creator, Broadbent seems to regard God as the enemy.

This negative attitude towards religion, held by the majority of fighting men depicted in the novel, is exemplified in the relationship of Anderson and his fellow soldiers. Like the Priest from Abruzzi in A Farewell To Arms, Anderson and his religious beliefs are not taken seriously by the other men in his battalion. When he is quoting the Book of Revelation, the other soldiers fail to see the significance of the prophecy, and reduce it to an obscene joke:

"It's all in the Book of Revelation."

"But what does it mean? It sounds like Greek to me."

"The leopard is France, the bear is Russia and the lion is England."

"Where's Canada in this deal?"

A sleepy voice from the corner of the dugout answers:

"Canada is under the lion's tail" (Harrison 104).

Obviously, Anderson's religious concerns have very little meaning or significance for the other men.

However, unlike the Priest from Abruzzi, who seems reluctant to assert his beliefs, Anderson continually inflicts his religious

idealism on the other soldiers. When they are singing a "dirty marching song", Anderson "complains to the Chaplain of the battalion":

"Suppose we were bombarded or something. Imagine them going to meet their God with a dirty marching song on their lips" (Harrison 138).

Also, during an enemy bombardment, when the soldiers are cursing and "belittling the sexual habits of the enemy", Anderson intervenes: "How do you expect to live through this with all your swearing and taking the Lord's name in ^{fake} vain?" (Harrison 99). Again, upon hearing of a soldier's encounter with "a little French tart", Anderson is disgusted and concludes that the French are "Godless swine, those frogs. No morals. Small wonder that their country is laid in ruins" (Harrison 82).

As a result of his preaching and moralizing, Anderson is treated with a great deal of contempt by his comrades. Throughout the novel, the other soldiers "heap abuse and ribaldry on his head" (Harrison 99). In fact, when the narrator sees Anderson praying, he becomes somewhat disgusted: "His lips move in prayer. He gives us the creeps" (Harrison 58).

In light of the fact that the soldiers in the novel participate in mass killing and witness an abundance of death and disease, Anderson's

religious concerns, like "taking the Lord's name in vain" or "the soldiers going to meet their God with a dirty marching song on their lips", become totally insignificant and absurd. The narrator says of Anderson's God, "To think we could propitiate a senseless god by abstaining from cursing!" (Harrison 10). The narrator considers Anderson's 'God' to be a 'senseless' one, and therefore, in the eyes of the narrator, Anderson's moral concerns are ridiculous.

[In Generals Die in Bed, as in Death of A Hero and A Farewell To Arms, the church promotes a 'romantic' and ultimately false picture of the war. Consequently, the values asserted by the church concerning the war effort do not apply to the harsh realities of the frontline] When the narrator is on leave in London, he meets an "Anglican curate", and proceeds to discuss the war. The curate says to the narrator:

"Isn't the spirit of the men simply splendid? Sobered every one up. West End nuts who never took a single thing seriously leading their men into machine-gun fire armed only with walking-sticks".

"...the best thing about the war, to my way of thinking, is that it has brought out the most heroic qualities in the common people, positively noble qualities ..." (Harrison 172)

The narrator feels that "it would be useless to tell him of Brownie, of how Karl died, of the snarling fighting among our men over a crust of bread ..." (Harrison 72). Essentially, the curate's "way of thinking", which is marred by naiveté, epitomizes popular religious opinion regarding the war. The "heroic" and 'noble' qualities that he speaks of do not exist at the front. The "West End nuts" who lead their unarmed men into machine-gun fire are, as the narrator reveals, characters in "a newspaper story" (Harrison 172). Undoubtedly, it is the ignorance of the church regarding the nature of war, and the perpetrating of such ignorance on the homefront, that leads experienced soldiers to detest orthodox religion and those who represent it.

Inevitably, the narrator of Generals, like George Winterbourne and Frederic Henry, becomes totally disillusioned about his life in the context of war. Like George, the things he once found meaningful become insignificant. For instance, at the front the narrator quotes a line from one of Wilde's poems: "He who lives more lives than one, more deaths than one must die"; a poem that sounded "so sparkling" in his "high-school days", but now "the words sound 'hollow and flat'" (Harrison 29). Similarly, he tries to remember Montreal: "I

wonder what St. Catherine Street looks like"; but at the front "all that is unreality"(Harrison 20).

After experiencing the realities of the war, and failing to understand them, the narrator concludes that it is "Better not to ask questions". Throughout the novel, he makes a deliberate attempt "not to think about the war". He claims that "It is better ... not to seek for answers. It is better to live like an unreasoning animal" (Harrison 129). Abstract concepts, such as patriotism, faith and glory fail to explain the entire affair, therefore it is "Better not to ask questions".

In realizing the futility of the war, the narrator, like his comrades, seems to react against the idealism on which the 'crusade' was based. There is, in the novel, a complete rejection of "holy abstractions" (like glory, sacrifice, honour) and, instead, a great emphasis placed on fulfilling and often over-indulging the senses. Sex, gluttony and alcohol, which were deemed inappropriate for the "Christian Warrior," are major concerns of the soldiers in the novel. The narrator claims that Béthune, a small French town, with its "Wine shops", "egg and chip joints" and a "tolerated brothel", is "a soldier's haven" (Harrison 136). Moreover, at one point in the novel, a soldier claims "It's beer we want. To hell with glory" (Harrison 136). Indeed, the high and

ultimately false ideals associated with the war are replaced with concrete, and attainable, sensualities.

Similarly, there is in the novel a complete rejection of traditional sexual morality. Nineteenth-century concern for sexual and moral purity is completely undermined. As the narrator reveals, the "ultimate point of all trench conversations" is "the discussion of women" (Harrison 105). Sexual restraint is disregarded and replaced by sexual promiscuity; consequently, "Three hundred men stand waiting" in line in front of a brothel, and bully beef and tobacco are traded for sexual favours (Harrison 83, 147). When the narrator is in London on leave, and he meets Gladys, a prostitute, who provides him with food and sex for his entire leave, he says: "How well this woman understands what a lonely soldier on leave requires" (Harrison, 167). Indeed, for the soldiers at the front, sex and alcohol become both a means of momentarily forgetting the war and rebelling against it.

The looting of Arras is perhaps the best example in the novel of the combatant's bitterness and cynicism toward war and subsequent withdrawal into the physical world of the senses.

Before entering Arras, a city in northern France, the soldiers are told by the commander of the division that the "Canadian corps [is]

to act as shock troops to break the German offensive", and he hopes that they will conduct themselves "to the greater glory of Canadian arms" (Harrison, 211). The men are then 'piled' into lorries and transported towards the front. En route they are forced to go without food, they must "defecate between the bars" of the lorries, and are "soaked to the skin" from a "sudden downpour of rain" (Harrison, 219). They ride in the lorries for a day and a night in one direction, and then turn around and go back the way they came. The soldiers become restless and the "talk becomes mutinous" (Harrison, 213). They decide that millions of people are making money out of the war, and are "all praying to God... for the war to last..." (Harrison, 218).

Finally, in this rebellious state the men reach the deserted city of Arras. The soldiers pillage the city: "some of them are chewing food as they pillage" (Harrison, 226); others "lie drunk in the gutters", while still more "run down the street howling, blind drunk". Some of the men "bust into the church and took all the gold and silver ornaments..." (Harrison, 227). Two other soldiers "got so drunk" that they "drowned in about five feet of wine" in a wine cellar (Harrison, 232). Many of the men had "terrific pains in the stomach" from eating "too many tins of lobster and other dubious canned ware" (Harrison 233). In short, the

soldiers do not conduct themselves to "the greater glory of Canadian arms"; in fact, it is concepts such as "glory" and "Canadian arms" that they are reacting against.

The looting of Arras, although quite literal, is also a symbolic act of vengeance for the disillusionment towards the war that the majority of soldiers experience in the novel. They rebel against the discipline of the army, they rebel against the entire idea of the orderly "Christian soldier" going to save the world, and they rebel against the traditional moral and sexual values of their society. They drink and eat to excess, "set fire to some houses" and rob the church (Harrison, 228). However, their rebellion is short-lived and order is restored by the Military Police. The men are then rounded up, piled into the lorries, and shipped to the front lines.

Lambert Davis states that Harrison presents "a picture of the war which is brutal and terrible, but which bears the unalterable stamp of truth" (Davis, 469). Indeed, Harrison does present a "brutal and terrible" picture of the war, and it is doubtful that one could read Generals Die in Bed and still regard the First World War as a "holy crusade".

CONCLUSION

In discussing Death of a Hero, A Farewell to Arms and Generals Die in Bed in a religious context, and in relation to one another, several themes emerge. Perhaps the most obvious is the fact that each author makes a deliberate attempt to repudiate the war. Moreover, they seem to denounce the war for much the same reasons. Namely, owing primarily to the nature of the war, the religious and political idealism associated with it become completely false. As we have seen, in each novel death is not portrayed as a holy sacrifice, but rather, as a futile slaughter. Combat is not depicted as an "exercise in manhood", but as an impersonal and degrading experience. The "Hun" was seldom regarded as the enemy; on the contrary, the enemies are the generals, politicians and propagandists who romanticize the war, often without knowing the realities of it.

Likewise, upon discovering the realities of the war, the main protagonist in each novel exhibits a profound disgust for orthodox religion and suffers from a general disillusionment about society as a whole.

Because each novel falls under the general category of an 'anti-war' novel, it is possible to discuss their effectiveness as such. Furthermore, although each of the three authors clearly denounces the war, they have very different methods of doing so.

Death of a Hero is, by the author's own declaration, more of a threnody than a novel. Aldington has very little concern for the literary conventions usually associated with the novel, such as plot, setting and character development. In fact, Death of a Hero reads more like a personal attack than a novel. The author does not relay his message to the readers through the characters in the novel but, rather, intervenes in the narrative and explicitly states his views. As stated earlier, George Winterbourne serves mainly as a podium on which the author orchestrates his commentary on the First World War. Consequently, the depiction of George's experiences from birth to death becomes at times rather tedious, as they seem to serve as mere fill-in between the author's comments. Moreover, in his desire to denounce wartime rhetoric, Aldington creates a sort of 'anti-war' rhetoric of his own. Often, his comments on the war seem to be written in extreme rancour, and one wonders if this bitterness may have diluted and interfered with his artistic creativity.

However, this criticism is not meant to suggest that Death of a Hero is not a valid or a worthwhile commentary on the war. Indeed, Aldington does present some very interesting and legitimate concerns and conclusions about the First World War. He very clearly illustrates the irony, ambiguity and tragedy of the war, and explicitly states that this was his intention: "I knew what I wanted to say, and said it"(Aldington viii). And if parts of the novel have been written in animosity, the author, after experiencing the horrors of war, is undoubtedly justified in so writing. In short, although there seems to be some conflict between content and form, the shortcomings of the latter do not nullify the validity of the former.

A Farewell to Arms, on the other hand, is a very artistic novel. In comparison to Aldington, Hemingway is very indirect in his comments on the war, and it is largely through the experience and dismal fate of Frederic Henry, that the reader is confronted with the absurdity of the First World War.

However, at times, it seems that although the war is depicted as a horrific event, Hemingway is denouncing more the nature of the war, rather than the concept of war itself. Frederic Henry seems more disgusted with the poor organization of the war effort, and the asinine

military strategy on the Italian-Austrian front, rather than with the war representing the 'collapse of civilization' as it did for Aldington.

Moreover, although Hemingway does illustrate the political and religious disillusionment associated with the war, there does seem to be opportunity for heroics and exotic adventures in the novel. In fact, Frederic Henry does make a rather daring escape from the carabinieri, and retreat into Switzerland with Catherine. Even the way Frederic Henry admires his "Austrian sniper's rifle with its blued octagous barrel and the lovely dark walnut, cheek fitted, schutzen stock" (Hemingway 11), or the way in which he carefully chooses a pistol in front of Catherine, suggest that the war does have certain attractive qualities (Hemingway 149). Whereas one is sure Aldington would never participate in another war, with Hemingway one is not so sure.

Nevertheless, the overall depiction of the war in A Farewell to Arms is similar, although not so emphatic as that in Death of a Hero. Virtually every character in Hemingway's novel experiences the same loss of faith in humankind as did George Winterbourne.

Finally, in Generals Die in Bed, Harrison's style, much like Hemingway's, is very straightforward, and forceful. He seldom attempts to influence the reader's judgment of the war, outside of presenting the

harsh realities of trench warfare. Harrison simply presents the war as he experienced it, and allows the reader to draw his/her own conclusions about it. Despite his horrendous experiences, Harrison retains a very high degree of objectivity in the novel. And although there is very little character development in the novel, this seems to underline the observation that the mechanical nature of the war made the front line a very impersonal place. Furthermore, despite the fact that the narrator remains somewhat anonymous, he is very acute and convincingly describes the feelings of his fellow privates, who, like him, become totally disillusioned with the war.

Perhaps the reason for the varying degrees of cynicism expressed towards the war in these novels is the fact that the authors are British, American and Canadian respectively. Undoubtedly, the British and the Canadians (although to a lesser degree) suffered far greater losses from the war, and were more deeply involved for a longer time than the Americans. Therefore, British and Canadian authors had a longer time to become cynical about the war. American authors do not nearly as often express an extremely bitter cynicism about the war as do their British counterparts (Luccock, 204). Hence Aldington's extremely vehement commentary on the war, and in fact on British society at large,

may be largely due to the fact that he is British, and served in the British Army.

Nevertheless, whether British, American or Canadian, each author was subjected to the religious idealism of the war, and undoubtedly suffered both psychologically and physically from it. Yet the war not only had an impact on the individual; it also had a profound effect on organized Christianity. Because religious rhetoric was rendered absurd by the war, formal religion came to be regarded as naive at best and absurd at worst. In fact, religion

was to a real degree bankrupted by the war. It had to confront the needs of a battered world ... with a pathetically emptied treasury (Luccock, 40).

Indeed, although sincerely believing in the war as a Crusade, the church, in so faithfully and rigorously supporting the war, was unknowingly putting a noose around its neck . The loss of faith in religion experienced by George Winterbourne, Frederic Henry and the narrator of Generals Die in Bed is undoubtedly representative of this phenomenon.

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