

Compulsion Versus Volition in *A Farewell to Arms*

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Abstract

Ernest Miller Hemingway (July 21, 1899 – July 2, 1961) is one of the most widely read American novelist of the 19th century, whose works have been variously interpreted. His fiction was influenced by different sociological, political and psychological trends of the time. The adventures of his personal life inspired some of the fascinating stories in his fiction. A Farewell to Arms projects the concept of individual struggle in the face of stiff resistance. His protagonist helplessly strives to define his existence; he, however, miserably fails in his struggle for actualizing his existence. But ultimately, he learns the secret of a meaningful existence. This study traces these elements of existentialist philosophy and examines its influence on the art of Hemingway. Although his views are also influenced and modified by the trends of the time, the influence of existentialist philosophy is vividly visible in all his writings. The paper analyzes the major works of Hemingway, particularly his famous novel A Farewell to Arms, in the light of existentialism. It specifically focuses on the rise and fall of the hero and heroine in the novel when they try to define their existence in this free and void world.

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Introduction

Ernest Hemingway's novel *A Farewell to Arms* (1929) is a story of love between an expatriate American Lieutenant Frederic Henry and a British nurse Catherine Barkley in the backdrop of World War I. The title of the novel has been derived from a poem by the 16th-century English dramatist George Peele. The protagonist Frederic Henry, caught in the whirlpool of existential dilemma, has volunteered for the Italian Red Cross to serve on the war front. He is seriously wounded and is rescued and is taken to Milan to recuperate in a hospital, where he falls in love with a British nurse. The war has ravaged the lives of people in Europe. Their sufferings were not only physical but also psychological. There was maim and destruction all around. The war destroyed the serene and calm atmosphere of the past, bringing instead miseries and troubles to the wounded and traumatized people. G.S. Frazer, in his book *The Modern Writer and His World*, has very aptly described the effects of the war on the lives of the English people:

But above all, the First World War shattered Great Britain's rational self-confidence and produced doubts, uncertainty, and confusion. Instead of the thoughtless hopefulness of the Edwardian decade, and there was 'a new realism' – a tendency to think of man as a strictly limited creature. (97).

Frederic Henry's Baptism of Fire

Man is caught between the two wills, compulsion, and volition, as he is unable to steer the direction of his life according to his own sweet will. According to Hemingway, man is put at the mercy of that universal power which controls and directs the lives of creatures on the earth. Carlos Baker in *The Writer as Artist* describes the miserable condition in these words, "Into the dust is where the troops are going – some of them soon, all of them eventually" (95). Hemingway also paints a dismal picture of the Italian town where Henry is staying

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before going to the front. The dusty leaves, tree trunks and roads are a reminder of the imminent doom which is soon going to befall the hapless soldiers and civilians alike. Henry observes:

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 afterwards the road bare and white except for the leaves (7).

Hemingway paints the war-ravaged Italian landscape in very grim and sombre colours and projects through his narration the loss of hope and failure of the modern civilization. He delineates a pessimistic picture of the scenes where soldiers are living in squalor, afflicted by various diseases. Carlos Baker also points out that:

In *A Farewell to Arms*, Hemingway makes a very intricate but meaningful combination of images and symbols to be able to express whatever he has to convey to his readers. Hemingway uses natural symbols—the mountain, the plain, the river, the dust and the falling leaves—to create an autumnal mood (95).

This gloomy mood is highlighted by the troubles faced by the soldiers on the front waiting for their turns to be butchered by the German and Austrian forces. Henry is also at the mercy of the Austrian forces when he delivers foodstuff to the soldiers on the front. Although it is Henry's choice to join the Italian Red Cross to assist the fighting soldiers on the front, the trench shells, which create havoc and destruction all around, are beyond his choice and control. He suffers a knee injury when a mortar shell explodes near his trench, where he is busy eating cheese with his companions. Henry vividly describes the painful scene:

I sat up straight, and as I did so, something inside my head moved like the weights on a doll's eyes, and it hit me inside in the back of my eyeballs. My legs felt warm and wet, and my shoes were wet and warm inside. I knew that I was hit and leaned over and put my hand on my knee. My knee wasn't there (47).

Catherine has also suffered an early tragedy when her lover and fiancé is taken away by the cruel jaws of death on the war front. She is helpless in the face of unsurmountable tragedy. Her life is rendered meaningless by the cruel and savage machination of the warmongers. She

describes her tragedy to Henry that she thought "he might come to the hospital where I was" and she thought that he would be slightly wounded with "a sabre cut"; she was dismayed when he was brought to the hospital after "they blew him all to bits" and pieces (20). She has suffered this terrible loss because it is beyond her power to control the war machinery set rolling by those who have the least concern about human life and losses.

Henry's Existentialistic Perception of Life

Henry understands the meaningless struggle of his existence when he faces the nihilistic void on the war front against his romantic episodes with Catherine Barkley. He is willing to quit the idea of war for a while and to relapse into their romantic reveries to relieve their tortured souls when he asks her, "Let's drop the war", to which she responds with a resigned tone that there is "no place to drop it" testifies to the fact that the common humans are tools in the hands of powerful manipulators (24). Henry also realizes the futility of his struggle on the war front and is always waiting for an opportunity to escape into the arms of his beloved away from the death and destruction of war. When one night Henry is drunk and is unable to visit Catherine, he realizes that life is more meaningful when one is in the arms of one's beloved and "[he] was feeling lonely and hollow" when he could not meet Catherine (36). Henry is wistfully thinking that the war could come to an end, "Only if the Austrians stop fighting. One side must stop fighting. Why don't we stop fighting? If they come down into Italy, they will get tired and go away. They have their own country" (43). Henry is unable to decipher this enigma as to why the Austrians are fighting the Italians when they have got their own country. But he can understand the futility of his own existence in the face of this human greed to usurp the land and lives of others. Henry wants an escape from the cruel clutches of this existence as his childhood memories to surge up in his mind. But it is beyond his capacity to get a release from this quagmire because he could see no possible exit from this hell. When Henry lies in bed in the hospital, he relishes his childhood memories when a child falls asleep on a couch, being exhausted from all day's play and then taken by his mother to a bed: "It was like being put to bed after early supper" (71).

Henry is even helpless in the face of his emotions for Catherine. He exclaims: "When I saw her, I was in love with her. Everything turned over inside of me" (74). Later, when Catherine leaves after her brief interlude of romance with Henry, he ruminates: "God knows I had not wanted to fall in love with her. I had not wanted to fall in love with anyone. But God knows I had . . ." (75). This romance is set as a tarp for him to shape his future course of life. Catherine too has been captivated by the love of Henry. She has also been entrapped by her romantic relations. She declares her love for him as her religion and her total asset: "You're my religion. You're all I've got" (91). She wishes and prays that there should be only happiness in her life: "Do let's please just be happy" because she is aware that man is always at the mercy of cruel and senseless omnipotent power (92). Michael Reynolds, in his book *Cambridge Companion to Hemingway*, suggests that life for both Henry and Catherine are like a race of horses that has been rigged. Their struggle to survive in the backdrop of the war is meaningless as both "are but inconsequential specks whose lives will be missed by no one but each other. Both are war wounded, and both use each other, in the best sense, to bind those wounds" (121). They try to get relief from the war wounds in the arms of each other, but it is of no use because they are already trapped biologically. Mark P. Ott, one of the modern critics of Hemingway, writes in his book *A Sea of Change* that "Nature, not free will, according to naturalist critics, controls the destiny of this couple" (61). Both the lovers are at the mercy of Nature. They might not have the slightest chance to meet each other only once in their lifetime had there been no war(s). They have been brought together and entrapped from their far-off abodes on the Italian front. Neither the war nor Nature was in their control. Henry and Catherine are unable to plan the future course of life. When Henry asks her for marriage, she rejects the idea as impractical. She convinces Henry that the authorities "would send [her] away" after marriage and that already "[they]" are married" (90). Even one of the fellow nurses, Helen Ferguson, predicts that Catherine will never have a chance to get married. The reference to Andrew Marvell's poem "To His Coy Mistress" in the discussion of the lovers is very apt. Henry is aware of the transient nature of time and tries to persuade his beloved to take advantage of it by enjoying it together to the

maximum. He tries to make her realize that it is not in their control to live longer because the death may knock at their door any moment.

Henry is Trapped by the Superior Will

After recovery, Henry is again assigned duty on the front at Bainsizza. The bleak surroundings of shelled buildings and muddy roads added by alternating snow and rains exacerbate the troubles and miseries of these hapless soldiers here and everywhere. Both Henry and Gino have a hectic discussion on the topic of patriotism. Gino is also fed up with the war and wants that the Italian soil should grow "more potatoes" than soldiers (143). The War has also transformed the views of Frederic Henry. His perspective of life has been changed drastically. He no longer considers the values of society as valuable and sacred. The glory and sanctity of human values are lost forever for him, and he thinks that the war is an organized butchery. Human life and sacrifices carry no value for the hero any longer. He is disillusioned about the war, and that is the main reason behind the desertion of his duties on the front. Henry openly confesses that he ". . . had seen nothing sacred, and the things that were glorious had no glory and the sacrifices were like the stockyards of Chicago . . ." (144). The war has changed the meanings of all those objects which earlier carried great value for him in his life. He is so much traumatized and psychologically disturbed that all the meaningful values and traditions of the lost society hold no more validity for him. He observes that abstract things are hallowed and meaningless and have no purpose against the concrete and solid things in life. He finally gains this revelation that: "Abstract words such as glory, honour, courage, or hallow were obscene beside the concrete names of villages, the numbers of roads, the names of rivers, the numbers of regiments and the dates" (144). He is convinced that war is a tool in the hands of the powerful section of the society, and they have glorified such values as courage, honour and bravery to make fools of the common citizens to use them as fodder for cannons.

The Italians think that they had a better chance of survival in retreat. They presume that if they got away from the war front, their chances of reaching hometowns safely would increase. Even their retreat is very orderly and organized. Henry describes that: "The retreat was orderly, wet and sullen. In the night, going slowly along

the crowded roads we passed troops marching under the rain, guns, horses pulling wagons, mules, motor trucks, all moving away from the front. . .” (146). But the retreating soldiers are unaware of their fates as they are going to land in greater troubles than those they are facing currently. Sooner or later, some of the helpless few are going to face disasters on their home front. Free will is exercised when Henry takes a different route while they retreat from the front. He makes a sensible decision in his own mind thinking that the Austrian planes are attacking the Italian forces that are retreating on the regular routes. But his decision leads him into a quagmire because all his ambulances are stuck in the mud, and they must abandon these vehicles. Again, free will comes into clash with the universal will when Henry fires at and wounds one of the renegade sergeants who refuses to help Henry in cutting branches of the bushes to get the vehicles unstuck. Henry, in a very detached manner, observes: “Halt,” I said. . . . “I order you to halt,” I called. They went a little faster. I opened up my holster, took the pistol, aimed at the one who had talked the most, and fired. I missed, and they both started to run. I shot three times and dropped one” (158). It is an impulsive act on the part of Henry, but it takes away the life of an innocent Italian man as he is not bound to obey the orders of an American who is not his immediate commander. Bonello, a fellow driver, finishes the job left incomplete by Nature and seals the life and fate of the helpless sergeant. Later on, Henry confesses his responsibility for leading his ambulances and men to this dead end. He says, “It was my fault. I had led them up here. The sun was almost out from behind the clouds, and the body of the sergeant lay beside the hedge” (160).

The writer gives a glimpse of the battlefield where the lives of the common soldiers are of no value and can be taken at the whimsical decisions of any man who is in a state of self-assumed authority. Even Bonello gloats, “I killed him. . . . I never killed anybody in this war, and all my life I’ve wanted to kill a sergeant” (161). This shows the extreme form of inhuman and callous attitude from those being used as war machines to butcher others mercilessly. When Frederic Henry walks towards Udine along with his fellow drivers, one Aymo is shot and killed by the Italian rear guards. Aymo’s death amply proves that the humans are puppets in the hands of fate because they wanted to secure themselves from the

enemy fire, but one of them succumbed to the bullets of their fellow soldiers.

Later, they take shelter in an abandoned farmhouse. Henry is lost in his childhood reveries of playing in a barn. He puts his current troubles and pains away for a while and feels that: “The hay smelled good and lying in a barn in the hay took away all the years in between” (168). Piani, a fellow driver, informs Henry that Bonello has deserted them, showing his willingness to be captured alive by the Germans as he thinks this is a safe way to survive. Henry pacifies his troubled mind by assuring himself that each one has the right to take his own decision. At last, worn out and in a terrible state, they catch up with the line of retreating Italian soldiers. Henry realizes the absurd and confusing conditions he has been experiencing on the battlefield. He says, “We had walked through two armies without incident. . . . No one had bothered us when we were in plain sight along the roadway. The killing came suddenly and unreasonably” (170). He conveys this point to the readers that man is not in full control of his fate, and he is always at the beck and call of the force’s superior to him. He does not know when he is going to face the ultimate challenge of death in this broad battlefield of life.

Henry and his fellow soldiers are up to a new challenge of being questioned by the Italian battle police for desertion once they cross the dangerously raging river over a bridge. The carabinieri was questioning the officers and summarily shooting them on the spot that got separated from their men while retreating from the front. Henry, mulling over his chances of escaping or allowing himself to be questioned because he is suspected to be a spy for he is an American, thinks:

I saw how their minds worked; if they had minds, and if they worked. They were all young men, and they were saving their country. . . . The questioners had that beautiful detachment and devotion to stern justice of men dealing in death without being in any danger of it” (175).

Henry exercises free will when he jumps into the cold river so as to avoid being questioned and shot at by the military police. He expresses his feelings: “I ducked down, pushed between two men, and ran for the river, my head down, I tripped at the edge and went in with a splash. The water was very cold, and I stayed under as long as I could” (176). He allows the water to cruise him down the river. His main objective is to fight against the forces of death as long as he

can. Earlier, saving himself from the Germans, his sole aim was to keep himself alive as he says, “The thing to do was to be calm and not get shot at or captured” (164). Everywhere he is facing death, not only through the hands of the Germans and Austrians on the front and while retreating but also through the hands of the Italian battle police on the home front. For the time being, he fights against the cold currents of the fast-flowing river. Henry exhibits “grace under pressure” while trying to stay alive in the cold water. The long and cold bath in the surging water of the river is a baptism for Henry. He feels that he is absolved from his previous duties and responsibilities as a soldier fighting for a cause. From now onwards, he is a different man as he himself says, “Anger washed away in the river along with any obligation” (181). When he gets to the shore, he is hungry and exhausted. He strips away the stars from his military uniform so as to disguise his identity. He makes his ‘separate peace’ by replacing his military uniform with a civilian one after reaching Milan on a train full of guns and military gear. He borrows a suit of civilian clothes from his friend, Ralph Simmons, one of the opera singers, and asks about the procedures for travelling to Switzerland. Henry, while on his way to Stressa to meet Catherine, feels uneasy in his new dress. He says, “I missed the feeling of being held by your own clothes” (187). However, Henry understands abandoning the idea of war is very difficult, and life would never be the same for him after experiencing such excruciating mental and physical traumas in the aftermath of war. Henry consoles himself with the idea that “I was going to forget the war. I had made a separate peace” (188). According to Ray West, the final analysis of the novel “is that you cannot escape the obligations of action—you cannot say “farewell to arms”; you cannot sign a separate peace. You can only learn to live with life, to tolerate it as “the initiated” learn to tolerate it” (151). The writer suggests that humans are faced with challenges of life and death, and they must encounter these challenges courageously. There is no safe exit from it.

Henry and Catherine enjoy their blissful solitude while staying in the hotel away from the humdrum of the war front. But Henry is not unmindful of the doom and destruction caused by the war and also senses an imminent danger coming his or Catherine’s way. While reflecting on the vagaries of time in his nighttime reveries, he ruminates: “If people bring so much courage

to this world, the world has to kill them to break them, so of course it kills them. The world breaks everyone, and afterwards, many are strong at the broken places. But those that will not break it kills (sic).” (193).

Disillusionment of the Protagonist

This pessimistic outlook is developed after Henry experiences so much horrors and ravages of the war. He realizes that all the strong and courageous people are broken and killed by nature. There is a special hurry in nature to eliminate those who do not accept defeat easily. He reaches this understating that even the ordinary folk are going to face death with no special hurry. He has the divination that compulsion is constantly at loggerheads with the volition of an individual. The universal will is bent upon to render the free will of a man meaningless. And Henry finds it hard to solve this riddle. After quitting his responsibilities on the war front, Henry feels that his life is now a rudderless ship. He tries to forget the harsh memories of war and to seek comfort in trivial activities as he goes out fishing with the bartender Emilio. When he returns to the hotel, Catherine asks: “What’s the matter, darling?” “I don’t know.” “I know. You haven’t anything to do. All you have is me, and I go away.” “That’s true.” “I’m sorry, darling. I know it must be a dreadful feeling to have nothing at all suddenly.” (198).

Henry realizes that all he has got in his life now is only the presence and existence of his beloved. This conversation also forebodes the coming upheavals in their way. Henry knows that they are now “trapped biologically” (110). They have no chance to escape the clutches of death. Later in the evening, while playing billiards with Count Greffi, an old cultured European friend of Henry, they enjoy their time while drinking and discussing matters other than war. While the parting company at the end, the count ironically predicts the coming events in Henry’s life as he says, “I hope you will be very fortunate, very happy, and very, very healthy” (203). But very soon, Henry is going to be unfortunate and unhappy.

The Romantic Interludes of the Couple and the Premonitions

Henry and Catherine manage to save their skins from the horrors of war. They arrange for their clandestine trip to Switzerland with the help of

Emilio, a bartender in the hotel where they are staying. The couple, ignorant about the doom they are heading to, think that they might have a chance to survive and lead a peaceful life in the scenic alpine of Switzerland. They make their home in an idyllic spot in the Swiss countryside outside the town of Montreux, where they enjoy the scenic view of the lakes and snow-covered mountains from the window of their bedroom. Their pleasurable life lasts several months: "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." (234).

They shut out the world and the memories of war and draw closer to each other in their romantic interludes. Their daily routines are reduced to mere sleeping, eating, reading, hiking and playing cards and while being oblivious of the horrors of war. Henry visualizes that "The war seemed as far away as the football games of someone else's college" (224). The couple enjoys their blissful time together while visiting different places. Henry, still haunted by the memories of war, buys a newspaper to keep himself aware of the recent developments on the front, learns that "Everything was going badly everywhere" (224). Now they think that the time is in their hands, and they will be the maker of their fortunes themselves. They are so much preoccupied with each other's thoughts that Catherine cuts her hair short and asks Henry to grow his hair long so as to resemble each other as she claims "to be like [him]" (230). But they are unaware that the life's winged chariot is hurrying near and is going to overtake them soon. Catherine is still in her romantic fervor and hopes that after her delivery, she will "look lovely, darling, and be so thin and exciting to [him] that [he]'ll fall in love with [her] all over again" (234). With the setting in of the spring, the idyllic life of Henry and Catherine comes to a close. The scenic beauty of the valley is transformed into muddy slush as the spring rains play havoc with the snow-peaked mountains. This change in Nature predicts the doom for the couple as the time of delivery also draws near. Their joyful moments are over now as they prepare for their last ride together. There is such a strange coincidence in the crisis of Henry's life and the war on the front that when Catherine is getting ready for her final battle in the hospital, Henry, through the newspaper, comes to know that "It was March, 1918, and the German offensive had started in France" (236). Catherine exercises her free will, plans for the

future as she buys baby clothes while Henry realizes that their honeymoon period is over: "We knew the baby was very close now and it gave us both a feeling as though something was hurrying us, and we could not lose any time together" (239). Both of them have the premonitions that the situation is not going to augur well for them. The doctors and nurses rush to the labour room, trying to save the lives of both the baby and Catherine, are defeated by the universal will as both fall prey to the machinations of Nature. The baby has a stillbirth while Catherine dies of a haemorrhage. Even the solemn entreaties of Henry for Catherine fall upon deaf ears: "I knew she was going to die and I prayed that she would not. Don't let her die. Oh, God, please don't let her die. I'll do anything for you if you won't let her die" (254).

The Cosmic Will Prevails

The existential dread is fully highlighted in this scene when Henry turns to God to save the life of his soul mate at any cost. Even earlier in the novel, Henry confesses that he does not love God, but still, he admits, "I am afraid of Him in the night sometimes" (69). He is not asking anything for himself but for Catherine because life seems to be purposeless for him without her. After the death of the baby and Catherine, Henry thinks that life is a cruel game that spares no one. He visualizes:

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 (252).

Henry finds it very hard to live without Catherine because she was the sole focus of his life now after he has said farewell to arms and has made his separate peace with the war. They have become one soul as earlier in the story, Catherine tells Henry, "There isn't any me. I'm you. Don't make up a separate me" (90). She even declares her religion, "You're my religion. You're all I've got" (120). Mark Spilka, in his book *Hemingway's Quarrel with Androgyny*, observes that this confession is:

[A] time-honoured Christian Romantic version of the union of two souls. . . . Lacking any connection with God or immortality, this atheistic faith will eventually fail them, leaving the ambivalent Frederic alone and bereft with the

memories here recalled. But for a time, they are fused in mystic selflessness (214).

Both the lovers are fused together in their romantic spell and have developed selfless devotion for each other. They are ready for any sacrifice for each other because they have reached the climax of their mutual relations. Henry laments the tragic death of Catherine, and he could not comprehend the mysterious nature of universal will, which always works against the human will. He expresses his gloom that: "This was the end of the trap. This was what people got for loving each other" (245).

Henry recalls an event from his youth when he had the chance of saving some ants on a log from a burning fire. The event vividly exhibits the stark reality of life and the oppressive pessimism looming large over the fates of helpless humans when caught by the forces of Nature:

Once in camp, I put a log on the fire, and it was full of ants. . . . 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 whiskey in before I added water to it. I think the cup of water on the burning log only steamed the ants (252).

This episode vividly exhibits the existential dilemma of human life. It bitterly expresses the phenomenon of Nature that man is a pigmy in the face of natural forces which are beyond his control. Henry likens the lives of hapless human beings in this world to that of the ants on the burning log. As the trapped ants are in a panic to save themselves from the imminent doom running helter-skelter, similarly, the trapped humans on the earth make full use of their best judgement to avoid the cruel jaws of death but of no use. Henry confesses that he could save the ants from the burning fire by removing the log from it, but he turned a blind eye towards their plight. He openly admits his callous attitude towards the ants by dousing them with water, not for the purpose to save them but rather to empty his cup, thereby prolonging their tragic end. The event bitterly exhibits the futility of human endeavors against the elements of Nature. Carlos Baker also finds close similarity between Hemingway and Hardy:

If a Hardyan President of the Immortals takes any notice of them, He does little enough for their relief. He is like Frederick Henry pouring water on the burning campfire log --- not to save the ants but only to empty a cup (101).

Life for Henry is now a meaningless activity bereft of the love and presence of Catherine.

When Catherine and the Child say their final farewell to Henry, he is unable to fathom the abyss of his nihilistic existence, and so he again enters her room where she is lying motionless and dumb. As she always expresses her fears about her death in the rain, the last scene is ample proof of justifying her claim. Henry paints the last scene in these words:

But after I had got them out and shut the door and turned off the light, it wasn't any good. It was like saying good-by [sic] to a statue. After a while, I went out and left the hospital and walked back to the hotel in the rain (256).

For Henry, Catherine is transformed into a statue of marble by the forces of Nature. He comes out of the hospital empty-handed. He loses both his love and hope because the only symbol of their love is also lost. The walk back to the hotel in the rain symbolizes the dark and gloomy atmosphere shrouding the locality. Even Nature is shedding tears on the irreparable loss Henry suffers. Mencken explains the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche when a man is faced with absurdity in life, then the purpose of living ceases to exist: "The best death is that which comes in battle "at the moment of victory;" the second-best is death in battle in the hour of defeat" (135).

For Henry, the second-best option of finitude is available because he is utterly defeated by the superior will in his struggle to actualize himself. He could not counter the universal will and resultantly lost everything in his life. From the very first scene of joining the forces on the front and then taking a series of decisions to avoid the ultimate catastrophe, returning to the arms of his beloved and lastly, securing his abode in the scenic valley of Switzerland, at last Henry realizes that life is an absurd activity and man is a pawn on the chess-board only to be controlled by the universal will. Henry echoes Hemingway's philosophy of the absurd that life is a futile exercise and one must get ready for the death which may come any moment. Henry is sorry for the loss of the precious life of his beloved because for him, living a life is an earnest activity, and the death puts an end to it as Kierkegaard stipulates, "To die is indeed the lot of every human being and thus is a very mediocre art, but to be able to die well is indeed the highest wisdom of life" (76). But Henry expresses the view of his author, which is described by John Killinger that "For both Hemingway and the existentialists, the choice is never made finally, but must be made again and again, as if it had

never been made before” (98). Henry has no choice but to assert himself again and again and so as to excel his absurdity which in itself is a meaning of life like Sisyphus. He has to accept the reality that Catherine is no more there in his life, and he has to live without her. Kierkegaard postulates that, like existentialists, Hemingway is “merely letting you, witness, just as he himself is doing, how a person seeks to learn something from the thought of death” (102). Henry learns from the death of Catherine that no man is in total control of his limited universe. Every person makes the best of his judgements and planning in his life, but death, like a predator, always waits for an opportune moment to strike and hence renders all his schemes and plans meaningless.

Conclusion

Hemingway, through his art, projects the philosophy of stoicism and endurance in the face of hardships and troubles in the field of life. Hemingway asks the readers to shun the false notions of existence and that every man should exhibit endurance and courage in the face of the harsh realities of life. He also teaches that each man should live a life of integrity, truthfulness and purposefulness. He claims that man showing these characteristics can surmount the absurdities of meaningless existence. Lawrence Broer, in his book *Hemingway's Spanish Tragedy*, expounds that Hemingway “introduces not another embodiment of the passive hero, but a man who will teach the hero how to live in a world of death and destruction---who will pass on to him the necessary rules for survival” (46). Henry also has to learn the rules of survival after the tragic departure of Catherine. He has to exhibit full courage and stoicism in his vain and purposeless existence. He has the realization that life without her would be an uphill task but living such a life fully and excelling in the absurdity is true heroism in the view of his author. Henry, while praising Catherine for her bravery and courage, says: “The coward dies a thousand deaths, the brave but one”, to which she responds that “He [the man who said it first] was probably a coward. . . . He knew a great deal about cowards but nothing about the brave. The

brave dies perhaps two thousand deaths if he's intelligent. He simply doesn't mention them” (110-111). Catherine echoes Hemingway's philosophy of bravery and heroism that the brave people suffer a great many hardships and tragedies but remain undaunted and fearless. They stoically face the tragic events of life. They do not fear death but rather make death their goal of life towards which they travel with purpose and aim. Hemingway stipulates Kierkegaard's philosophy expressed in his book *At a Graveside*: “Death in earnest gives life force as nothing else does; it makes one alert as nothing else does . . . the thought of death gives the earnest person the right momentum in life and the right goal toward which he directs his momentum.” (83).

Hemingway, through Henry, conveys the same message to the readers that every person must learn how to lead his life with earnestness. He is of the view that this realization can only be reached through personal experiences because no one can teach others the idea of earnestness in life. Hemingway and Kierkegaard are of the opinion that a man can only actualize his life by focusing on the thought of death as Kierkegaard posit that harbouring the earnest thoughts of death make life worth living and meaningful. He says:

If you, my listener, will fix your attention on this thought [of death] and concern yourself in no other way with the consideration than to think about yourself, then this unauthorized discourse will become an earnest matter also with you. To think of oneself (sic) as dead is earnestness; to be a witness to the death of another is a mood (75).

Henry, after witnessing the death of Catherine, is totally a changed person. He is not only disillusioned about his own existence but also about the whole world. After witnessing so many horrors and experiencing such terrible tragedies, his whole life has changed forever. Now he could not reconcile himself with his current circumstances, which is bereft of meanings and values. His mood has been transformed once for all, and his world of love and romance has been subverted forever as he will not be able to regain his former mental status anymore.

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