chapter six

Frederic Henry:
The Run for Life

And we are here as on a darkling plain
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,
Where ignorant armies clash by night.

Matthew Arnold,
“Dover Beach”
In Ernest Hemingway’s *A Farewell to Arms* (1929), a book equally divided between two types of romance and one of stark reality, the hero, Frederic Henry, attempts to flee both the false romance and the stark reality which that romance camouflages. Yet the romance has another, more genuine level, that of Henry’s love for Catherine Barkley, and serves to counterpoint the false romance of a “picturesque war” that is anything but picturesque; it is the harsh reality (of the war) rather than its fake romance that Lieutenant Henry eventually flees. Finally, when Henry himself is in danger of a senseless summary execution—part of the larger senselessness of the war—he plunges into the Tagliamento River, escapes the war, and, like John Andrews before him, makes his much celebrated “separate peace.”

The split upon which Frederic Henry’s escape from the war is predicated is that which exists between the realities of the war and its alleged glory. This romantic byplay is pointed up by the rhetoric employed to inspire whatever remnants there may be of inspiration within the apathetic and the cowardly. If we can believe T. E. Hulme, romance, or romanticism, is often given to an excess of rhetoric; and in *A Farewell to Arms* it is an attack on that excess that we encounter. It is the same sort of talk that John Andrews in *Three Soldiers* encounters in the Y-men, and it is the talk that is used to glorify all wars, whatever their justification. Between the realities of the war and the rhetoric lies the unambiguous shadow. Critics have frequently made this point in their analyses of Hemingway’s novel, usually quoting the passage beginning with, “I was always embarrassed by the words sacred, glorious, and sacrifice and the expression in vain” and ending with, “and I 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 except to bury it.”

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This war, then, is not a war seen through the haze of a romantic past—flashing swords, cavalry charges, the appearance of high romance—but a new kind of war, where swords, those symbols of old wars, are outmoded both in fact and as symbol. We see this when Henry, returning to the front from a convalescent leave, goes into a shop to buy a pistol. "How much is this?" asks Henry of the woman shopkeeper, after which the following dialogue ensues:

"Fifty lire. It is very cheap."
"All right. I want two extra clips and a box of cartridges."
She brought them from under the counter.
"Have you any need for a sword?" she asked. "I have some used swords very cheap."
"I'm going to the front," I said.
"Oh, yes, then you won't need a sword," she said. (pp. 148-49)

Swords now are more valuable as ceremonial adjuncts than as practical weapons. Thus, without seeming to say very much, Hemingway manages with exceeding skill to communicate his point that not only are swords outmoded as weapons but are even ludicrous in this particular war. One does not need a sword to accomplish what machine guns or artillery can produce with greater—more deadly—efficiency. The shopkeeper's appeal to Henry, that her swords are both used and cheap, carries ironies beyond the point of the denotative reference of those words. Curiously, if one detaches the first letter of the word sword, one is left with word; and it is words that are now used (or overused) and that are also cheap. In this context Henry comes to distrust words. Plainly then, like the used and the cheap swords, used and cheap words no longer belong in a war that is far more real than the rhetoric woven around it.
So much for romance and rhetoric. But what of the realities? Again Hemingway pictures the specifics that act as vehicles for those realities. When Rinaldi, Henry's surgeon friend, visits Henry in the field hospital, he asks him certain pointed and leading questions about Henry's wound and the circumstances that led up to it:

"Tell me exactly what happened. Did you do any heroic act?"
"No," I said. "I was blown up while we were eating cheese."
"Be serious. You must have done something heroic either before or after. Remember carefully."
"I did not."
"Didn't you carry anybody on your back? Gordini says you carried several people on your back but the medical major at the first post declares it is impossible. He had to sign the proposition for the citation."
"I didn't carry anybody. I couldn't move." 2
"That doesn't matter," said Rinaldi. (p. 63)

That Henry is to receive the silver medal for a valorous act he did not carry out is additional irony to bring home the larger irony in the business of medal-awarding itself. For in this new war, carrying wounded to safety under fire, eating cheese while the shells scream in, or simply being part of a drunken artillery battery on the way up to the front (as portrayed in the interchapter in *In Our Time*)—c'est tout égal: it all works out to a silver medal.

In *A Farewell to Arms* a stark catalog of the attributes of modern warfare is presented. Early in the book, Rinaldi is talking to Henry, who has just returned from a leave: "Since you are gone [he tells Henry] we have nothing but frostbites, chilblains, jaundice, gonorrhea, self-inflicted wounds, pneumonia and hard and soft chancre. Every week someone gets wounded by rock fragments. There are a few real wounded" (p.
12). Rinaldi is, of course, talking shop as a surgeon. Physical debilitation and deterioration prove good topics to relieve the boredom. Yet this dreary catalog of melancholy events seems to come closer to the truth about warfare than even the famous passage so often quoted, which involves the contrast between the rhetoric and the names of towns and rivers, the numbers of regiments. But it is finally in the setting of *A Farewell to Arms*—the chaos and the disorder of the retreat at Caporetto, so sharply contrasted with the "neat" little wars of the nineteenth century—that the disgust with twentieth-century reality is more forcefully shown.

In this novel of war, disillusionment, and subsequent escape from both, Lieutenant Frederic Henry is not only the central character but also the fictional and moral viewpoint of the story. As for Henry in terms of fictional reality, there are two Frederic Henrys—the early Tenente, before the retreat from Caporetto, and the Fredric (or *Mr.*) Henry subsequent to that (and his own) retreat. Between the two Henrys, or the two periods that form the boundaries of Henry's major action—his escape—lie all of those reasons and pressures and motivations that eventually bring about that escape.

The early Henry previous to Caporetto is an impassive young man who has already become partly inured to the world of pain and to some of the harsh realities beyond the war. For Henry has not exactly come to the war expecting only glory and adventure; his enlistment in an ambulance unit is not so much an act of false heroics or bravado as it is an escape from something presumably more objectionable than the war itself. We are not told much about Henry's past before his enlistment, other than that he has been studying architecture in Rome. What we know is that he is a young American who has volunteered for service in the ambulance corps; that he has, vaguely, some relatives
back in the States who periodically send him money to supplement his meager lieutenant's pay. But this is all we know—providing, of course, one takes for granted an ignorance of Henry's fictional predecessor, Nick Adams. If Frederic Henry, as many critics see him, is the young Nick Adams grown slightly older, then Henry's joining the ambulance unit begins to appear more "logical" and even manages to fit into the large escape pattern of the novel. For Henry's escape into the Italian army—and it is an escape of sorts—can only be understood in the light of Hemingway's earlier work. As Francis Hackett has suggested, the escape into the Italian army is no mere act of bravado; it is an escape from other unpleasantnesses that a younger Frederic Henry—the earlier Nick Adams—has already experienced in the Michigan woods.⁸

The pre-Caporetto Henry, when he goes on leave, makes his absence from the front serve as a temporary escape. He had wanted to go to the Abruzzi mountain home of his friend the priest, "where the roads were frozen and hard as iron, where it was clear cold and dry and the peasants took off their hats and called you Lord"; but instead he had gone down into the plains and the cities of those plains, each offering its own form of escape, the "smoke of cafés and nights when the room whirled and you needed to look at the wall to make it stop, nights in bed, drunk, when you knew that that was all there was" (p. 13). Already, this early in the novel and in Henry's life as a soldier, the more splendorous illusions have been lost. But Henry is still not intent on making any meaningful escape, only a passive agreement with himself to stick things out before going off to the cities behind the lines to temporarily lose himself in drunkenness and forgetfulness.

As early as chapter 2, in the officers' billet, various proposals for more limited escapes are half-entertained, in the parodied
manner of a Baedeker's guidebook. The major, a lieutenant, and the priest give their own social, spiritual, and geographical versions of this need to get away from the present reality of the war. The major states that all thinking men are atheists (the escape from God); but the major does not believe in the Freemasons either, who, for the priest, are no better than atheists. The lieutenant, on his part, believes the Freemasons to be a noble organization. They then both recommend that Henry visit their favorite towns and places when he goes on leave. The major feels that Henry should visit Rome, Naples, and Sicily. The lieutenant recommends Amalfi (ironically, that Websterian place of blood and revenge!), where "they will love you like a son." The priest would like to see Henry go up to the Abruzzi where he could visit the priest's family at Capracotta (a name phonetically similar to that other town associated with a greater escape, Caporetto). The others, however, laugh at the priest for making this suggestion. It is, of course, part of their more general priest-baiting designed to compensate for their own wish to escape what the priest stands for. What need is there to go to the Abruzzi when Henry might as well go to Naples to enjoy the girls? Here is a foreshadowing, shown in the lewd talk of the officers, of the deeper split between Henry and his fellow officers, and the direction the escape will later take. The suggestions reveal a split between those escapes leading only to a momentary gratification of the senses and the truer escape (or greater responsibility?) of the love for God as represented by the windswept, snowcapped mountains of the Abruzzi.

The officers, then, in contrast to the priest, offer Henry escapes that are essentially escapes from one's deeper self. Here, the meaning of the priest-baiting becomes pointed: the officers are suggesting to Henry escapes that are the antitheses of all that the priest stands for—something, perhaps, that they them-
selves, courageous men that they are, would like to run away from. The priest is thus a constant reminder of the alternative to the escapes they offer Henry.

By chapter 7 Henry is already beginning to feel separate, and separated, from the others; for a new element has entered the story—Catherine Barkley. Now the choice is no longer between the highly spiritualized love and dedication of the priest and the passion without love of the officers. There is a third choice: it is the love that has the best elements of both the first and the second. This sense of separation Henry already feels by chapter 8, when he has already met Catherine, and his interests have taken a new turn. At this stage, however, full and complete love has not yet developed; there is still only a kind of prurient curiosity, a willingness to make his relationship with Catherine a game of chess. Yet from the moment of his first meeting with her, Henry, without quite realizing it, has already taken the first tentative step toward making his separate peace. If billet camaraderie is part of the war, then Henry can only go through the motions instead of feeling emotion. He is already separate from the others, and as he tells us:

“They [the officers and the priest] talked too much at the mess and I drank wine because tonight we were not all brothers unless I drank a little and talked with the priest about Archbishop Ireland.

“Half-way through the wine I did not want any more. I remembered where I was going.” (pp. 38–40)

Rinaldi tells the others that Henry has a “rendezvous” with Catherine Barkley, whom the lieutenant in his near-drunken condition had almost forgotten. But when he rouses himself from his stupor, he remembers Catherine with a pang of conscience. Until now, he had treated his relationship with her as a game of chess, where you looked ahead to keep from being
biologically checkmated—something much more difficult to escape from than the army. But by chapter 7 the biological trap (which involves Henry's conscience) has been sprung, and when he leaves the officers' mess, a great loneliness and emptiness comes over him. Unlike the others back in the mess, he can no longer look upon love as a dirty word; and when he almost misses seeing Catherine, a greater feeling of loss comes over him, foreshadowing the last loss at the novel's end: "I went out the door [of the billet] and suddenly I felt lonely and empty. I had treated seeing Catherine very lightly, I had gotten somewhat drunk and had nearly forgotten to come but when I could not see her there I was feeling lonely and hollow" (p. 41).

By chapter 9 Henry still accepts the war, but not necessarily for any patriotic reasons. As he tells the ambulance drivers who are opposed to the war and believe that Italy should get out of it, the war is a bad job, but still a job that needs to be done and gotten over with. "'I believe we should get the war over,' I said. 'It would not finish it if one side stopped fighting. It would only be worse if we stopped fighting.'" The war, as Henry admits, is bad; but quitting will not make things better. And so "we must finish it" (pp. 49–50).

But, as the saying goes, the voraciousness of the war seems to increase by what it feeds upon: the more brutal and callous the atrocities, the less human do men at war become, so that the individual is no longer regarded as a human being but as a number, a "tenth man," to be taken out and shot as a warning to others that even a regiment's failure to advance can be made into an act of cowardice for any given individual in that regiment:

"Were you there, Tenente [asks one of the ambulance drivers], when they wouldn't attack and they shot every tenth man?"
"No."
“It is true. They lined them up afterward and took every tenth man. Carabinieri shot them.” (pp. 48–49)

Thus, the senselessness and the brutality of the war continue, where the brutalities no longer even repel the sensibilities, but only make those who see them and who testify to them even more brutalized themselves. “‘Carabinieri,’ said Passini [another driver] and spat on the floor.”

The senselessness of the war becomes even more pointed as the retreat at Caporetto gives way to the utter disaster of a rout, and the Italian rear guard starts to fire on its own troops. By now organization has disintegrated to the extent that in the rain-soaked darkness one cannot tell Germans and Austrians from Italians. But if the retreat has collapsed into rout, that situation is not materially helped by the confusion of Italians firing on their own men. The stupidity and the chaos continue as the retreat progresses, but long before Caporetto, the war has been stalled, with the only changes being brought about by the replacement of the wounded, the dead, the exhausted, and the battle-fatigued with fresh troops, who in their turn are put through the same futile and bloody treadmill. Henry, who has some knowledge of military history, suggests at one point an answer to the general low morale of the troops. What is needed is a leader. Inescapably, such a leader would be Napoleon. In that earlier war, back in that archaic century, Napoleon, though lacking all of the advantages of modern communications systems, had still been able to get things done. In that other war, a Napoleon or a Marshal Ney, or in individual instances even soldiers from the ranks, might have been capable of some single act of heroism, even if only limited to one of modest dimensions.

In this present war there is no longer room for heroism, either at the top or at the bottom. War has become a machine-like affair with such vast organizational logistics—regiments,
divisions, armies—that the individual as individual has simply
got lost in the larger machinery of the war. One gets wounded
not in a blazing charge but while eating macaroni and cheese.
Even Stephen Crane's Henry Fleming was not placed in such
an ironically demeaning position. Fleming, dishonored as he
feels himself to be in the first half of *The Red Badge of Courage*,
survives long enough to make his "glorious" charge, ironically
ineffectual as that charge is. But when Lieutenant Henry runs
away from the battle (or rout), he neither seeks nor has the
opportunity to redeem himself; for Henry Fleming felt there
was some point in redemption, but Frederic Henry saw milit­
tary redemption as part of the general obscenity of war's vo­
cabulary—"sacred, glorious, and sacrifice and the expression in
vain." Like the name Henry itself, the values of Henry Fleming
and Frederic Henry have become transposed in the latter halves
of each of these novels.

With each step along the inglorious road of retreat, the less
obvious becomes more obvious to Henry. And if the war were,
indeed, to go on for another hundred years—he suggests it
might well be another Hundred Years' War—and were to be
prosecuted in its present manner, there would be little point in
going on; and that becomes even more pointless when the Italian
military police summarily begin to execute those in the retreat
above the rank of major. It is only then that Henry can articu­
late to himself the justification of his own desertion. That he
sees the situation in analogical terms is not so much to Henry's
credit—though we have to credit him with some sort of insight
that sees the loss of a battle in terms of the loss of stock in a
department store fire. But he carries the comparison tellingly
further:

You had lost your cars and your men as a floorwalker loses the
stock of his department in a fire. There was, however, no insur-
ance. You were out of it now. You had no more obligation. If they shot floorwalkers after a fire in the department store because they spoke with an accent they had always had, then certainly the floorwalkers would not be expected to return when the store opened again for business. They might seek other employment; if there was any other employment and the police did not get them. (p. 232)

Until now, Henry has succeeded in keeping these unpalatable facts from himself. Indeed, up until his wounding, his involvement in the war had been almost that of a passive bystander. But on the retreat at Caporetto—which eventually becomes Henry's retreat—Henry sees the truth concerning something that he has until now only suspected: war respects no uniform, no tongue, no common interests; it permits battle police to mete out death with the impartial detachment of those who themselves are not immediately threatened by death. And it further numbs the sensibilities of those already brutalized. Henry has learned, and is still learning, his lesson; but the larger rationalizations and justifications begin to make their way into his consciousness. Even at the moment of his escape from the battle police into the Tagliamento, there is still no conscious moral rationalizations for his act; only an ex post facto justification of it, in which moral justification plays little or no part. Henry's escape thus points to survival (much as Huck Finn's) rather than to moral rebellion.

After Caporetto and his plunge into the Tagliamento, Henry's separate peace is complete. As he tells himself on the floor of the flatcar carrying him away from the front to Maestre, "It was not my show any more." Even here, Henry has the detachment of one who, though he has already seceded from the "show," bears no ill will or bitterness toward those who have hurt him. There is no "antiwar" philosophy here. Henry now looks at the war from the point of view of one who has been
burned and no longer wishes to go near the attractively deceptive fires with the innocence he had previously brought to them. Abstractly, one may well regard fire as dangerous, hardly to be played with; and this is Henry's view of the war before his escape from the battle police. Many of his illusions have already been eroded, but the fact does not hit home with quite the impact until the final debilitating "burning" of Caporetto. Thus, when Henry secedes, he does so on impulse, as an act of survival. It is only on the train carrying him away from the war that Henry can regard his former life with the detachment of a stranger. As Malcolm Cowley has suggested, the Frederic Henry who came out of the Tagliamento is no longer the same person who had plunged into it.

Henry's escape moves on two levels, both in terms of immediate causes and consequences and in terms of philosophical implications. At its immediate level his escape tells us that he is through with the war. But at another level his escape has greater philosophical ramifications: He is not only done with the war, like John Andrews in *Three Soldiers* before him, "baptizing" that severance by his plunge into a river; his act, as has frequently been noted, has symbolic value, for in his desertion Henry has cut himself off from a world that makes war possible.

His plunge into the Tagliamento, however, is more than a physical act, or at a more exalted (and critical) level, a philosophical commitment: it has psychological and mythological implications. Certainly, the tenente who dives into the river is not the same person who comes out of it, totally exhausted, on the other bank. Henry has been—and again we must give the nod to Malcolm Cowley here—reborn, and, of course, through his rebirth has acquired a new identity. He is no longer Tenente but someone who was called that at one time, someone with a dead (or perhaps no) past, a present of some sort, yet also
someone with an uncertain future. When he goes to Stresa, the fact becomes clear that he is no longer the Tenente of the first half of the book. He now wears civilian clothes, borrowed from a friend, in which he does not feel altogether comfortable. The clothes, then, like the act that necessitated them, still chafe at Henry’s conscience. He tells us:

In civilian clothes I felt a masquerader. I had been in uniform a long time and I missed the feeling of being held by your clothes. The trousers felt very floppy. I had bought a ticket at Milan for Stresa. I had also bought a new hat. I could not wear Sim’s hat but his clothes were fine. They smelled of tobacco and as I sat in the compartment and looked out the window the new hat felt very new and the clothes very old. I myself felt as sad as the wet Lombard country that was outside through the window. There were some aviators in the compartment who did not think much of me. They avoided looking at me and were very scornful of a civilian my age. I did not feel insulted. In the old days I would have insulted them and picked a fight. They got off at Gallarate and I was glad to be alone. I had the paper but I did not read it because I did not want to read about the war. I was going to forget the war. I had made a separate peace. I felt damned lonely and was glad when the train got to Stresa. (p. 243)

Although Henry has made his separate peace, the war is still too close for him to be able to throw it off as he might “a wet bathing suit.” The pangs of conscience are still strong, and will later reappear. For if Henry, before Caporetto, cannot entirely reject the war intellectually, after Caporetto he is not completely able to make the break with it emotionally. Hence, he is unwilling to read the news about the war or, though such news is available, relive the disastrous retreat that is still going on, in which many of his comrades are still involved. Yet Henry’s
identity has undergone a change, for in that idyllic mountain
time with Catherine above Montreux, the landlord of the chalet
they are living in addresses Henry as Mr. Henry. Neither the
landlord nor his wife suspects Henry’s past, or his status of
deserter. For them, there is no Tenente Henry, only Mr. Henry.
But the acquisition of new—or reborn—identities is implicitly
interwoven with the necessity of leaving older places for newer
ones: one must leave former places in order to acquire new iden­
tities; and one must go to those places where no one knows
the former self (“We did not know any one in Montreux”
[p. 292]).

Like those escapers who have preceded him and those who
come after—the Joads, Jake Blount in The Heart is a Lonely
Hunter, Bigger Thomas in Native Son—Henry must light out
whenever the necessity dictates, to the Territory, to Seattle, to
the big city, to California, or the town up the road—anywhere
but where one has already been. With the move, the mover ac­
quires his new identity. And with the acquisition of that iden­
tity, the escape, even though not always as effective as the
escaper would wish, has completed its circuit.

In this novel of love and war, Catherine Barkley represents
the escape from war into love and into life. Henry’s love for
Catherine, though it might be treated as “autotelic,” not only
is an integral part of the pattern of escape but, by its very na­
ture and the circumstances under which it takes place, serves
to highlight the death and futility of the war itself; for in love
there is at least the possibility of a renewal of life. And cer­
tainly by its very nature, even in the most hopeless periods of
trial and flight, there is hope. The violence of the war only
serves to point up the precious fragility of the love between
Lieutenant Henry and nurse Catherine Barkley. Thus, though
it might sound like a callous judgment, Henry’s love for Cath-
erine—in its initial stages at least—is another form of escape from the war's violence and sterility; more, it is a counterpart (or counterpoint) to that violence and sterility.

Even if the love story is preposterous and unconvincing, as has occasionally been suggested, it is still an integral (and integrated) part of the story; for without it the pattern of the novel in its total effect would make even less sense, and the insanity of the war would be greater because unrelieved. In the love between Catherine and Henry there is at least the implication that not all actions in a world gone mad are themselves insane; that the only act that does make sense in a world of "confused alarms of struggle and flight" is the act of love itself. In this sense Matthew Arnold's "Dover Beach" is as much a poetic statement of what *A Farewell to Arms* is about as is (or perhaps even more than is) "To His Coy Mistress," the poem by Andrew Marvell that Henry recites to Catherine.

Although Henry's escape is a microcosmic example of the larger escape (or retreat) of the Italian army, it is paradoxically the great escape of the novel; for in that escape both the larger escape—the Caporetto retreat—and the entire senselessness of the war itself are made concrete. Just as the larger escape represents panic on a mass scale, so Henry's smaller escape represents the powerful instinct for self-preservation. Thus, when Henry makes up his mind to flee, it is not so much his mind that determines his action as it is his instinct to survive. Instinct rather than reason is the impelling force here. Like Huck Finn and John Andrews—and for probably similar "instinctive" reasons—Henry makes his dash for a river and goes in "with a splash."

In this retreat from Caporetto, the Italian army sets the tone and the circumstances of Henry's escape, and perhaps even justifies it in the face of the ineptness with which the whole
retreat is managed. Thus, the retreat from Caporetto takes on symbolic value in that it seems to suggest (like the retreat itself, which begins in order and ends in disorder) the world's retreat from order; and that flight in turn is transformed into one man's flight. Caporetto thus becomes the obligatory scene, as drama critics would put it, of *A Farewell to Arms*. And in this novel of escape, the larger escape more than matches, in the power of its movement and the vividness of its setting, Henry's escape, thus forming a backdrop worthy of it.

A number of critics have noted the resemblances between Lieutenant Henry and other heroic (or antiheroic) escapers in American fiction. Three that immediately come to mind are Henry Fleming (of Crane's *Red Badge of Courage*), Huckleberry Finn, and John Andrews; and it is the second two of this threesome who are in direct ancestry to Henry; for both Huck Finn and John Andrews, when they flee, do so for more than purely instinctual reasons. Behind their escapes lie those larger reasons—in Huck only semiconscious ones—that Fleming does not have, no matter how hard he tries to justify his flight. Both Huck's and Andrews's escapes have been dealt with at greater length elsewhere in this study. But the escapes and some of their attributes are sufficiently similar to Henry's for us to note one or two in passing. Both Huck and Henry encounter impasses when each resorts to prayer—and presumably come to a similar conclusion. In Huck's case it is explicit: prayer does not work; in Henry's case, though we do not share his thoughts, we can be fairly sure that his reaction is similar to Huck's. When Catherine is in the hospital and gives birth to a stillborn child, Henry frantically prays to God to keep Catherine alive. But she dies. Huck Finn also discovers that prayer, contrary to the Widow Douglas's allusion to "spiritual gifts," does not work for him either. The prayers of neither of these escapers work, and pragmatically, therefore—explicitly with Huck, im-
plicitly with Henry—they are worthless; one survives (or does not survive) in spite of prayers. Prayers, then, simply become one more set of outmoded rituals in a rejected social order of unworkable ritual, an order from which both Huck and Henry are trying to escape. Perhaps, in escape, the purblind doomsters may be avoided after all—perhaps!

The similarity between Henry and John Andrews of Dos Passos's novel lies in the somewhat more tangible device the authors resort to in having their heroes divest themselves of their uniforms, a kind of ritual of rejection in itself. Henry, like Andrews, must also abandon his uniform in order to make his escape more effective; but the casting-off of the uniform implies not only a practical need but a symbolic rejection of all that uniforms (both their own and uniforms generally) have come to represent. The practical need is the necessary one of course: to get rid of something that would plainly mark them as deserters. But the symbolic implication is wider, though equally obvious; for discarding the uniform proves to be, both for Andrews and for Henry, a symbolic representation of the loss of the old identity and the gaining of a new one. It is the outer sign of the inner-established "separate peace."

Finally, we must ask one question concerning the larger meaning of Henry's escape: how successful has it been? We can answer this question only if we see Henry's attempt as something tied in with the larger tragic implication of being mortal, something that generally holds for virtually all of the escapers dealt with in this study. Frederic Henry has attempted to escape from war and from death into what he hopes will be—and is, to some extent—a way of love and life; but in spite of this hope, he will discover in Catherine Barkley's death the truth that one may run toward life and love, even partly succeeding in the attempt, but one cannot run away from death. Thus, when Henry concludes that "they" would kill you if "they
caught you off base,' this is not only Henry's conclusion but the conclusion that *A Farewell to Arms* inexorably leads to—as story and as the concluding principle of that story.

1. Ernest Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms* (New York, 1929, 1957), pp. 184–85. All further quotations are taken from this edition. Quotations from the works of Ernest Hemingway are fully protected by United States and International Copyright. Used by permission of Charles Scribner's Sons.

2. This is, of course, a deliberate understatement on Hemingway's part (if for nonliterary purposes we equate Henry with Hemingway) and contains its own pointed undertones. For Henry's wounding is based on an actual incident at Fossalta di Piave, when Hemingway indeed carried a wounded soldier, under fire, to safety. For his "pains," Hemingway ran into machine-gun crossfire, in which some bullets pierced his legs. Like Lieutenant Henry, Hemingway was later decorated by the Italian government for heroism under fire. There is, of course, a touch of the hilariously absurd in this exchange between Henry and Rinaldi—especially as presented in the dead-pan manner of the passage. This, however, only heightens the irony of the wished-for glory (unselfish as Rinaldi thinks it is) and Henry's rejection of it.
