

*Vague*  
(A Literary Convention) As Used in Hemingway's A Farewell to Arms

In A Farewell to Arms Ernest Hemingway has created two characters whose prototypes have existed throughout literary tradition. *Sign Ref* This is the "star-crossed lovers" convention of which Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet is the *awk* historic example. A clear analogy between Shakespeare's representative early tragedy and this memorable Hemingway novel cannot be made, however. One must first realize *so* the twentieth century modifications of the theme.

*awk* The love affair of Frederic Henry and Catherine Barkley is *so* played against the broad background of the First World War (and the Italian Campaign in particular). *Ref* This is notable for several reasons. One is that Italy has always been, in literature and in life, a refuge for the Anglo-Saxon hounded by convention. Both Catherine Barkley and Frederic Henry are Anglo-Saxon, the former by birth, the latter by ancestry. This notion of the sense of fulfillment of the Italianate Englishman, emphasized particularly by the Romantics, is modified by Hemingway, whose lovers are led from Italy to Switzerland. *Dangling* (In attempting to construct a Hemingway-Shakespeare analogy), it may be noted that both stories occur in Italy and that both pairs of lovers are essentially Anglo-Saxon, for it must be

remembered that Shakespeare's characters are not intended to realistically correspond to their geographical situations.

Romeo and Juliet are upper-class Elizabethans. (Carrying the analogy further), both love stories are woven into (a tapestry) of conflict, one a traditional feud, the other a war of international consequence.

The theme of growing maturity on the part of the protagonist becomes a sort of dual theme in A Farewell to Arms if we are to consider the lovers separately as protagonists. Certainly Henry is not the sole protagonist as the book progresses. He and Miss Barkley progressively function as a unit, or as "separate but equal" entities, depending upon one's interpretation. It seems that the fates of both can be described adequately by a passage that occurs in the book itself:

"The world breaks every one and afterward many are strong at the broken places. But those that will not break it kills."

Although the theme of war per se is definitely of importance in A Farewell to Arms, its function appears to be that of creating the tragic balance. Tragedy must balance on one hand the evil of the world which is capable of destroying man and on the other hand the protagonist or protagonists and their innate nobility. Certainly this is apparent in the structure of this novel. Not only must Henry and Miss Barkley face life. They must face it at a time of major war. Their particular type of nobility, (if it may qualify as being noble,) is an intense and sincere love. Hemingway's achievement lies in the turning of lust, which is the impetus for the Barkley-Henry union, into a broader concept of love and affection.

These elements are present in Romeo and Juliet - the growing maturity of both Romeo and Juliet, the outer world of conflict and evil, and the intense love (although Shakespeare's interpretation is opposed to Hemingway's in its elaborate romanticism). The diversity of conclusion between the two works is not so great as might appear at first glance. In a literal sense both of Shakespeare's lovers die while only one of Hemingway's does. But, figuratively, part of Frederic Henry dies with the death of his and Catherine Barkley's issue. A biological mind might also pursue this on a literal plane. In both cases, however, there is present the ill-fated lovers convention of the world's literature.

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Ideas are good -  
sentences not so good.

X = error