CHAPTER-IV

HEMINGWAY AND THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR :

FOR WHOM THE BELL TOLLS

No other contemporary writer has brought us so many vivid studies of the wars’ impact on the defenseless human temperament as Hemingway has. The subject of war is central to most of his works and he says that in order to write about life, first you must live it. Hemingway finds a positive meaning in war as it is to defend liberty and democracy. Hemingway took part in the Spanish civil war to defeat France and the Fascists. He was a powerful member of the American Friends of Spanish Democracy and was engaged in anti-Fascist campaigning in his native country. He differentiated a ‘just’ war from an unjust war.

For Whom the Bell Tolls, published in 1940, grew out of Hemingway's personal interest in the Spanish Civil War of the thirties. While still a foreign correspondent in Paris, Hemingway had watched the Spanish political situation developing under the reign of Alfonso XIII. He had visited Spain again during the summer of 1931 after the overthrow of the monarchy. He predicted the civil war would begin in 1935, and when it erupted in 1936, Hemingway began writing and making speeches to raise funds for the Loyalist cause. Later, in 1937, he went to Spain to cover the war for the North American Newspaper Alliance. In reality, the Spanish Civil War was the first battleground for World War II, testing the forces of Nazism, Communism, and Fascism against either the republican or the royal form of government. Many young men from the United States and other countries joined the Spanish Loyalist forces in defense of democratic ideals in a war that was won by the dictator, Francisco Franco.
In the spring of 1931, after several years of civil strife and strikes, municipal elections were held in Spain. The parliamentary seats won in this election were divided between the leftists and rightists in such a way that an extremely dangerous situation was created. In view of this, and in the hope of avoiding the civil war, King Alfonso XIII decided on voluntary exile. On April 13, 1931, the republic was proclaimed.

The Communist-Socialist coalition which ruled Spain during the first two years of the republic was, like its predecessors, plagued by strikes, and a general election was called for in November 1933. In this election, the rightists were returned to power with a large majority. The Conservatives were, however, only able to keep themselves in power for about the same length of time that the leftists had. By February 1936, when another general election was held, public opinion had swung back to its previous position. The leftists won this election by a small majority — 256 seats to 217 for the Conservatives.

Five months after the communists regained control of the government, José Calvas Otelo, a powerful Monarchist-rightist, was assassinated. This was credited with precipitating a revolt which was led by the army, but which had obviously been planned for some time. General Francisco Franco was recalled from the Canary Islands, where he had been sent to keep out of politics. He flew to Spanish Morocco on July 17 and quickly overthrew the government there, continuing on to Spain the next day.

Within a few hours after Franco's arrival in Spain, his forces had taken several of the larger Spanish cities, and garrisons of the army all over Spain were in revolt. Surprising and stubborn resistance from the government's militia brought this initial
surge to a temporary halt, and the capital city of Madrid remained in the hands of the Loyalist-communists.

Foreign intervention in this revolt which had turned into a civil war was an accomplished fact by August of 1936. Russia was sending "observers" and "volunteers" as well as financial aid donated by its citizens to help in the communists cause, but they were not industrially capable of giving a great deal of aid in the form of material. In support of the Monarchist-rightists, both Germany and Italy sent planes, tanks, and munitions in addition to the usual "observers" and "volunteers."

The quickly formed Loyalist-communists forces managed to bring the war to a stop during the winter of 1936-37, but this situation was only temporary. By the spring of 1937 (the time during which the incidents of *For Whom the Bell Tolls* occur), they had, however, gathered enough men and equipment to prevent Franco from overrunning the country. The Monarchist offensive proceeded, but slowly.

International politics played a great part in the Civil War during the next two years, giving the advantage first to one side and then to the other. Throughout this period, both sides committed sickening atrocities. The communists were charged with the murders of hundreds of members of the clergy as well as the assassination of their political enemies, and the systematic bombing and strafing of nonmilitary objectives by the Monarchists was a portent of things to come in World War II.

By January of 1939, an almost completely effective blockade was preventing Loyalist troops from receiving further munitions and supplies. Resistance in towns and cities which had managed so far to hold out against Franco's troops began to
collapse. Finally, on March 28, 1939, the well supplied Monarchist forces overcame the resistance of the besieged city of Madrid. The long and bitter civil war was over.

After World War I, Hemingway had returned to the United States, but by 1921 he had been married and was back in Europe as a foreign correspondent. He travelled extensively in Spain and was vitally interested in the political developments during the reign of Alfonso XIII, from 1923 until 1931. In 1928 he moved to Key West, Florida, and so was not present for the overthrow of the monarchy in 1931. He returned to Spain for a visit that summer, however, and learned what had happened from his friends there.

When the Conservatives were returned to power in 1933, Hemingway was travelling in Africa. He was not surprised by the failure of the liberal government for two reasons. First, he felt that the mass of the people were not ready for it and did not want it. Second, though Spain had become more prosperous under the liberals, and though Hemingway agreed at least in principle with the civil reforms instituted by them, he realized that the peasants were receiving very little benefit from the government. The money was going where it had always gone — into the pockets of those in power.

Between 1933 and 1936, Hemingway carefully watched the political developments in Spain. When the civil war finally began in 1936, the only surprising thing to him was that it had come so soon, for as early as the summer of 1935, he had predicted that war would come before the end of the decade.

Hemingway went back to the U.S.A. after his first visit and pursued his mission of fund-raising and arousing public opinion in favour of the Spanish Republic. He gave his first public (and formal) speech to the Second American
Writer’s Conference in Carnegie Hall and willingly accepted several offices of responsibility to aid the Spanish Republic. All this dedicated and enthusiastic endeavour that Hemingway voluntarily undertook is amply suggestive of his warmth, sincerity and commitment to the cause of the Republic.

Later in 1937, he went to Spain to cover the war for the North American Newspaper Alliance.

Born out of his passion for Spain, *For Whom the Bell Tolls* is one of the most intimately autobiographical of Hemingway’s works. He was always close to Spain, chiefly for its bull-fighting, its earthiness, its primitivism, and when the Civil War between the Republicans or Loyalists on the one hand and the Fascists on the other broke out there in July 1936, with the foreign powers taking sides in this bloody political turmoil, Hemingway just could not do without getting increasingly involved in it to help the anti-Fascist forces there. In this connection he first visited Spain in February 1937 and stayed there till May of the same year; his second visit to this country covered a period of nearly six months from August 1937 to January 1938; he visited Spain for the third time in March 1938 and continued to be there till May 1938, but when he went to Spain once again in September 1938, he could very well see the collapse of the anti-Fascist forces there. It was only six months later that he started writing the novel in March, 1939.

The Spanish Civil War played a significant and decisive role in the life of Hemingway as a writer. As soon as he arrived in Spain as a NANA correspondent, he was instantly drawn to the cause of the democratic republic that was gravely in danger under the threat of Fascism.
It is interesting to note that long before the Western powers realized that the Spanish Civil War could be a potential threat to their safety and integrity, Hemingway (and Orwell, too) had first sounded the alarm call and pronounced prophetically its dangerous consequences. In all his journalistic jottings of this period, such as the NANA dispatches, articles for Ken, Pravda, his script for the film The Spanish Earth, and his address to the second American Writers’ Congress in Carnegie Hall, Hemingway consistently and unequivocally pointed out the dangerous possibilities of the Spanish Civil War if the Republicans failed in their resistance. He had raised a continuous alarm and urged all the Western countries to realize that Spain gave them the last and the ultimate chance to save Democracy.

The thirty NANA dispatches that Hemingway wrote during the most critical phase of the Spanish Civil War give the harrowing picture of untold atrocities and violence perpetrated by the Fascists on the civilian population of Spain. They show the chaotic atmosphere of Spain. The uncertainly, horror and misery of the people during the war is portrayed in vivid detail.

By and large, the dispatches, with their variety and diversity, project inevitably the writer’s genuine concern for human suffering. This very aspect is a clear manifestation of his change of attitude to life, and Carlos Baker rightly calls it Hemingway’s “recent conversion to social consciousness” (Life 478).

The ghastly, diabolical aspects of the horror of war catch Hemingway’s attention most. He is horrified seeing the indiscriminate bombing of the civilian population. As he reports in his dispatch dated April 11, 1937:

They killed an old woman returning home from the market, dropping her in a huddled black heap of
clothing, with one leg suddenly detached whirling
against the wall of an adjoining house. (27)

Invariably, like the old women here the innocent civilians were the inevitable
victims of the carnage. In the next dispatch, Hemingway reports how after an aerial
attack he sees a policeman covering “the top of the trunk from which the head is
missing’.(30)

More shocking than such ghastly murders is the growing apathy of the people.
As Hemingway writes in his usual understatement:

“The dead man was not nor any one you know and
everyone is very hungry up at the Guadalajara
front’(30)

In another dispatch, dated March 22, 1937 from Madrid, Hemingway gives yet
another account of such senseless, brutal killing. This time he reports on the death of
some Italian soldier fighting for the insurgents. He painfully describes how these three
Italians are lying dead “with waxy gray faces”.

They did not look like men, but… like curiously broken
toys (19).

In the description of such gruesome violence, Hemingway’s profound
humanitarianism emerges clear. This account of the Italian’s killing partly speaks
against the unjust allegation that Hemingway’s reporting was pro-Loyalist and anti-
Fascist. Secondly, the above account makes one aware of the fragility and transience
of human life—a rare phenomenon in the quasi-existential Hemingway world.

(Satyabrata Das 49)
On another occasion, Hemingway’s broad humanitarianism is reflected in his response to a dead rebel officer:

“We... left him with his serious waxen face where tanks could not bother him now or anything else” (87)

This shows how Hemingway responded to the suffering and death of a friend or a foe.

When one goes through these war dispatches from Spain, another thing that impresses us is Hemingway’s sense of history, geography, and even a fair measure of military tactics and strategy. (Das 50)

In a dispatch, dated May 9, 1937, Hemingway makes a very insightful analysis of the fate of the Spanish Civil War in the perspective of the American Civil War and the Russian Revolution. As Hemingway reflects, during the four-year struggle, the federal troops in America were thoroughly forged and stood like a granite wall on which Gen. Lee’s Army “rose and curled and fell”. In Russia too, despite a series of debacles, the Red Army triumphed finally because of “a united people, geography and time” (40). On the basis of these evidences of history, Hemingway’s analysis ends in an optimistic note in favour of a Republican victory in Spain. (Das 51)

Hemingway’s sound historic sense and wonderful power of assimilation is asserted in his dispatches. In an attempt at analyzing the battles of Brihuega and of Bilbao, Hemingway shows a keen sense of geography and a knowledge of the logistics of warfare when he concludes like any professional military strategist that Madrid is simply an “impregnable fortress” (40).
Another situation that Hemingway reports in his dispatch dated October 6, 1937 from Madrid shows insightful analysis and his diplomatic perception of the issue. Speaking of the rebel strong holds he reports:

They are holding fortified towns unconnected by any defenses, but which dominate the country around them as castles did in the feudal days (58).

Again, Hemingway’s keen diplomatic perception enables him to seek the skull beneath the skin. As he writes:

The fate of Spain is being decided in Berlin, where Mussolini and Hitler are conferring (59).

Later, much like a war-expert, Hemingway sends his analysis of the latest strategic position adopted by both the armies. As he writes about Franco’s:

Franco’s tactics in this whole offensive have been to feel for the soft points and, finding them, concentrate artillery and planes to make the break… (78).

Thus, in Hemingway’s war dispatches from Spain the many-sided talent of Hemingway is revealed. His accuracy of reporting, his objectivity, his thorough grasp of the matter, and his insightful analysis are evident besides his sound sense of history and geography. Above all, his artistic detachment and craftsmanship leave strong impressions on the reader’s mind. Even when describing the most crucial situations, Hemingway shows great restraint by not allowing his emotion to run high and presenting the stark reality with dispassion. (Das 53)

Hemingway came to Spain in 1917 as a NANA War Correspondent and his dispatches clearly showed his steady and rapid transformation. Coming in touch with
the International militia and with the Spanish civilians and workers who ungrudgingly came forward to face death and to sacrifice anything that the cause needed, Hemingway was further impressed by the enthusiasm, courage, selflessness and, above all, a unique fellow-feeling and solidarity in the Spanish Civil War on the Republican side.

Spain was not new to Hemingway. He knew Spain quite intimately, loved and appreciated its ancient sport of bullfight and identified himself with it. But the real or essential Spain was yet to be unfolded to him which he realized in the course of his Spanish Civil War experience. The extent to which Hemingway was influenced by the Spanish Civil War could be guessed from the speech he delivered to the American writers and poets in the Carnegie hall:

When men fight for the freedom of their country against a foreign invasion… and you know they were attacked and how they fought, a first almost unarmed, You learn watching them live and fight and die, that there are worse things than wars. Cowardice is worse, treachery is worse, and simple selfishness is worse.

By the spring of 1938 Hemingway had abandoned his previous stand of ‘separate peace’ and of isolationism and was already writing in terms of “universal democratic idealism characteristic of For Whom the Bell Tolls.” (Watkins 140)

Hemingway’s non-politicalness and solitaire as stances, assumed since the early twenties could not last long after Spain, the country beloved to him as his second home had fallen a prey to the vile machinations of scheming statesmen. The political turmoil jerked him from his isolated and serene world in Key West, into the
fold of the people. During the Civil War years, 1936 through 1939, Hemingway was either in Spain or mustering support for the Republic outside the country. He paid frequent visits to the strife-torn cities of Spain as a newspaper reporter for the NANA. Once he accompanied Joris Ivens, the Dutch film director and his cameraman to the besieged Madrid in connection with the production of the documentary film, “The Spanish Earth”. It was at a great personal risk that they succeeded in photographing the tanks and infantry in action against the Spaniards and the mutilated bodies of the innocent Madridians, lying littered about the streets. It was all disgusting.

*For Whom the Bell Tolls* is written with the characteristic Hemingway clear-eyed dispassion with a very strong undercurrent of moral passion, of love and understanding for his characters with all their foibles, their ignorance, their vulgarity, their cruelty and their hardness. He does not idealize these guerrillas but he admires them for their vigor, directness and sensitivity. Hemingway identified himself so much with the Spanish life that he left outraged at the betrayal of Spaniards by the foreign powers during the Civil War. *For whom The Bell Tolls* records a powerful reaction against the military adventure by the foreigners on the Spanish soil. “It will take many plays and novels to present the nobility and dignity of the cause of the Spanish people”, wrote the novelist in the preface to “The Fifth Column.”

An eye-witness to those fateful years in Spain, the time set Hemingway’s soul a writhing. And he just could not remain fiddling in the quiet world of his ‘Finca Vigia’ while Spain was burning. As a writer, he was called upon to play a definite role. “A writer’s problem does not change”, said Hemingway, “it is always how to write truly and having found out what is true to project it in such a way that it becomes a part of the experience of the person who reads it.” As a staunch supporter
of the Spanish Republicans, he was out to enlist support of the people for the Republican cause and prevent Spain from becoming “An international testing ground for Germany, Italy and Russia.” “I had no party”, said Hemingway, “but a deep interest in and love for the Republic… Politically I was always on the side of the Republic from the day it was declared and for a long time before.”

In 1937 when the Civil War was actually on, Hemingway addressed the Second American Writers’ Congress. So powerful was his denunciation of the Fascists then operating in Spain that every one of his hearers considered it an instance of Hemingway’s conversion, conversion from a non-political man into a socially committed artist. He condemned the Ethioian campaign in the strongest terms and called Mussolini “the cleverest opportunist in modern history… a grandstand player who was a dangerous force.”

When Hemingway spoke to the second American Writers’ Congress in Carnage Hall, New York City, the evening of June 4, 1937, he was merely back from two months reporting on Spanish Civil War. It was his first public speech and he denounced the native and foreign fascists then operating in Spain and his audience supposed that they were witnessing the wonderful transformation of a non-political writer to the who one was socially conscious.

The Carnegie Hall speech of Hemingway was to the second American Writers’ Congress. In the course of his seven-minute speech, amidst thunderous applause, Hemingway called upon his fellow writers to “write truly” and to project one’s findings of truth “in such a way that it becomes part of the experience of the person who reads it”. (Baker 477)
Hemingway thus draws his emotions from his real experience in life and transmutes them into art. As Carlos Baker observed in this context:

His first visit to war time Spain had destroyed his belief in the after-life, but it had also eliminated all his fear of death…. (Baker 481)

Hemingway visited Spain four times during the course of the troubled Civil War period and spent about a year in Madrid on several fronts. His dispatches covered the entire span from the point he arrived in Spain for reporting till he finally left broken-hearted seeing the imminent fall of the Republic. All these personal experiences passed into the body of For Whom the Bell Tolls.

His announcement, some months after he arrived in Spain, that he was writing a novel with the Spanish Civil War as its background, caused a great stir of excitement and anticipation in the literary world.

One displaced person in the spring of 1938 helped to dramatize for Hemingway the artist the predicament of the Spanish people. On Easter Sunday in 1938, an old man sat at a bridge across Ebro. In his retreat from San Carlos he had to abandon a cat, two goats and eight pigeons. He was concerned about their welfare.

“What politics have you?” asked Hemingway.

I am without politics said the Spaniard, “I am 76 years old, I have come 12 km’s now and I think I can go no further.”

About the 1st of March, 1939 he began to write his great novel on the predicament of the Spanish people during their civil war. He worked on the book for a period of eighteen months and when his labours were over he had written the great book about the Spanish Civil War. The driving emotion behind For Whom the Bell
Tolls is Hemingway’s sense of the betrayal of the Spanish people. Not only were they killed in vast numbers, starved out, deprived of weapons but they were also betrayed. The nature of betrayal of the Spanish people was complex in the extreme. The intervention of foreign powers was clearly an important factor in the prolongation of the war and the ultimate fascist victory. Hemingway’s own perspective on the fascist-communist struggle which had been going on sporadically throughout Europe since the close of World War I might have indicated a kind of tragic inevitability to foreign intervention in Spain’s internal troubles. Any genuinely true picture of the Spanish struggle, needed to embody all such considerations and bring them to dramatic focus in the lives of a group of people whose background’s present mode of behaviour would fairly represent the total betrayal of Spain.

In 1951, he wrote to Baker: “I had no party but a deep interest in and love for the Republic … In Spain I had, and have many friends on the other side. I tried to write truly about them, too. Politically, I was always on the side of the Republic from the day it was declared and for a long time before. (Baker, Artist 228)

Baker believes that Hemingway made an epic out of war as Tolstoy had done in War and Peace. He identifies the ‘elements of the epic manner’ that Heminway adapts to his needs in For Whom the Bell Tolls, and in this connection observes:

Despite the obvious gap between Spain and Ilium, the student of the epic may find part of his answer in considering the Homeric parallel. A primitive setting, simple food and wine, the care and use of weapons, the sense of imminent danger, the emphasis on masculine prowess, the presence of varying degrees of courage
and cowardice, the rude barbarisms on both sides, the operation of certain religious and magical superstitions, the warrior codes—these, surely, are common ties between the two sets of protagonists. Jordan is not to be scorned as the type of Achilles, and one can recognize in Pablo the rude outlines of a debased and sulking Ajax. Pilar the gypsy, though she reads the lifeline in Jordan's palm instead of consulting the shape and color of animal entrails, makes the consciousness of the supernatural an operative factor. (Baker 248)

Baker writers, *For Whom the Bell Tolls* is not a study in black and white. It is a study of the betrayal of the Spanish people- both by what lay within them and what had been thrust upon them and it is presented with that special combination of sympathetic involvement and hard-headed detachment which is the mark of the genuine artist… Its partisanship is in the cause of humanity.” (Baker 241)

‘If *For Whom the Bell Tolls* is a kind of epic, it is above all a tragic epic’ and ‘rich as it is in symbolic extensions, it is somewhere near a synecdochist’s triumph.’ In his very illuminating essay entitled, “*Mechanized Doom*: Ernest Hemingway and the American view of the Spanish Civil War, Allen Guttman observes that the central issue in *For Whom The Bell Tolls* is the symbolic opposition between man and machine and that for Hemingway *The Spanish Civil War* was, among other things, a struggle waged by men close to the earth and to the values of a primitive society against men who had turned away from the earth, men who had turned to the machine and to the antithetical values of an aggressive and destructive mechanical order.”

(Guttman 98)
Lionel Trilling says that the novel contains the grains of both success and failure. He says that “Here, we feel at once, is a restored Hemingway writing to the top of his bent” (Trilling, 639) and that this novel is “flexible enough, or ambiguous enough, to allow Hemingway a more varied notion of life that he has ever before achieved.” (Ibid, 639) He maintains that ‘from the beginning of the novel to the end, one has the happy sense of the author’s unremitting and successful poetic effort.’ (Baker 639) One great achievement of Hemingway’s art is that by means of his narrative skill, he creates his characters in such a way that they can stand on many symbolic levels. He achieves this by making them simple, unadorned in superfluous details, and equipped with reflective qualities by which they assume different shapes and colours from the reader’s mind. Sometimes, just one of their traits or incidents of life becomes a significant symbol. In *For Whom The Bell Tolls*, the raping of Maria stands for the exploitation of poor, defenseless people, the destruction of peace and happiness of domestic life which she represents, the inhumanity of man against man, and the ravaging of the virgin, primitive Spanish earth by the devastating machines. Robert Jordan is not only an artist, but also the conscience of the American people and of the freedom-loving world against the fascist domination, and a representative for all duty-loving people fighting for a noble cause.

*For Whom The Bell Tolls* is the fourth and the longest of Hemingway novels. The title is very apt as it is a novel about the Spanish civil war of 1936-38. The title hints at what that subject is and as Hemingway gives at the very opening of the novel on a blank page opposite the first chapter the magnificent passage from one of John Donne’s Sermons where the words that Hemingway used as the novel’s title appear. The opening has become a rhetorical cliché. The passage reads
No man is an *Iland*, intire of it selfe; every man is a 
peace of the *Continent*, a part of the *maine*; if a *Clod*
bee washed away by the *Sea, Europe* is the lesse, as 
well as if a *Promontorie* were, as well as if a *Mannor* of 
thy *friends*, or of *thine owne* were; any mans death 
diminishes *me*, because I am involved in *Mankinde*;
And therefore, never send to know for whom the bell
tolls; It tolls for *thee.*

*John Donne*

Hemingway, ‘uses this epigraph as a statement of the theme of brotherhood, of 
human solidarity of the involvement of all men in a common humanity. The author 
meant the classic quotation to apply to the contemporary scene, for the Island meant 
Spain, the loss of Spain to popular democracy meant the diminishment of the main 
land of Europe, representing all of western civilization with whose history and fate 
Spain was involved and by natural extension a kind of death for all mankind.

*For Whom The Bell Tolls* is a powerful, humane and deeply tragic work. It is 
to a great extent an autobiographical novel situated in the Civil War-torn Spain which 
Hemingway visited as a war correspondent and about which he wrote a play entitled 
‘The Fifth Column’. In writing *For Whom The Bell Tolls* and developing its 
characters Hemingway again applies the technique of novelizing personal experience. 
Many of his friends appear in the novel, sometimes under their actual names and 
sometimes in ‘thin disguise’. Duran, the Loyalist commander, and, Petra, 
Hemingway’s chamber maid at Hotel Florida appear by name. The Polish General 
Karol is portrayed under the disguise of General Golz. Koltsov, the journalist bears 
the fictional name of Karokov. Maria is a “Superb blending of two women”, one is a
nurse whom Hemingway met in Mafaro and the other is Martha Gellhorn, his third wife. The nurse contributes to the spiritual part of Maria. Jordan, the Protagonist, at best shares many of the personal characteristics and opinions of his creator. Hemingway even gives Jordan one of his most prominent traits---a red, black, killing anger.

Hemingway’s one peculiarity as a novelist was that he would never write about a situation he had not experienced himself. Robert Jordan of For Whom The Bell Tolls too is a modified self-portrait of Hemingway himself. The years of the Spanish Civil War awakened the soldier in him. He felt “itchy” once again for frontline action, and he saw it and met, in that capacity, thousands of volunteers, the partizans, known as “guerrillas”, who stand glorified in this great mosaic of the Spanish Civil War. He linked his destiny with the poor and the humble, shared their rough food, lived and fought with them in the Madrid Mountains. Hemingway was in the midst of their frenzied attempts at dynamiting bridges in a bid to arrest the progress of the Fascists. He was with lighting the fuses to destroy trains. He himself handled high explosives and threw them at the enemy.

Hemingway has preserved the artistic neutrality in the portrayal of Spanish situation. Like an artist, he has kept praise and blame admirably balanced. On the side of the Loyalists there is the lack of communication, co-ordination. Their characters are marked by littleness, cowardice, non-seriousness and their solidarity disrupted by intra tribal fights, inner contradictions, bureaucratic unreasonableness and general confusion. This novel contains what cannot be written by people with party alignments. This echoes Hemingway’s favourite belief: “the job of the artist is not to judge but to understand. No matter how hard it may be to believe it in our political
age, there is such a thing as artistic neutrality of one who puts humanity above politics and art above propaganda.” (Baker 251)

*For Whom the Bell Tolls* is a novel with big intentions written all over it. Dealing with a solitary historical event, the Civil War in Spain, the novel has universality of appeal. “All the Hemingway Themes”, in the words of James Gray, “are restated here: the courage of which human nature is capable when it has managed to identify itself with a moral issue; the humour that is ever present in the story of the appetites; the tenderness that declares itself in honest passion.” Like almost all Hemingway’s works, the novel concerns itself with philosophical and metaphysical issues. It is not, strictly speaking, a historical novel, though it relates to history in essential figments. It is a criticism of life, devoted to its imponderables. Titled provisionally as *The Undiscovered Country*, *For Whom the Bell Tolls* is yet another of Hemingway’s symbolic quest stories as he says that it wasn’t just the Civil War put into it, it was everything he had learned about Spain for eighteen years. The painful ironies of war are brought home to us with a subtlety of emphasis. All those who fight justify mass killing by invoking the “cause” they vindicate, ignoring the words of John Donne, significantly included in the epigraph to the novel: “any man’s death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankinde.” The futility of war has been suggested through sequences of utmost philosophical importance. A multi-dimensional study, *For Whom the Bell Tolls* is a tribute, no doubt, to the country and her people he had loved for a long time. Besides, it is also a study of the ideological complexities triggered by the Civil War of the sick, disgust with war, of Hemingway’s personal vision of man in confrontation with death.
For Whom the Bell Tolls, marks the culmination of Hemingway’s literary response to the Spanish Civil War. It is the direct outcome of the writer’s commitment to the cause of the Spanish people in their historic Civil War. The novel is based on the theme of blowing up of a strategic bridge by an American Volunteer dynamiter with the help of a group of Spanish Guerrillas. The entire action centers around the bridge in a rugged Spanish mountain range just below the Fascist line, and the duration of the whole action is only seventy-two hours from the time the protagonist arrives in the guerrilla camp till the bridge is blown, the guerrilla band escapes, and the protagonist dies. Hemingway shows wonderful precision and subtlety in handling the plot and achieves "the true union of passion and reason" that elevates this piece to "a work of art" (Sherwood 325). Hemingway renders all his experiences of Spain, its people, and of the war going on there within a span of seventy two hours. And the protagonist of the novel, Robert Jordan, too has to live his life within this very time-limit.

The action that spread over three days, shows, the wholesome personality of the Hemingway protagonist that Robert Jordan is, but also presents in microcosm the entire gamut of the Spanish Civil War, with all its merits and lapses. In this context, Leo Gurko observes that "the sense of microcosm is worked out exquisitely" (120). Hemingway brilliantly and effectively telescopes the Spanish Civil War of three years duration into three days time. The fight between the Loyalists and the Insurgents (Rebels) has a strong universal note as it represents the perpetual fight that goes on everywhere and every time in the world between the forces of good and the forces of evil. Similarly, Hemingway realistically presents a cross section of characters, from Pablo and Rafael at one extreme to characters like Anselmo, Jordan and Pilar at the other, representing broadly the evil and the good respectively. The treachery of Pablo,
the lack of commitment to the cause in people like Rafael, who chases rabbits when he should guard the entrance, the eccentricity of people at the helm of affairs like Andre Marty, the half-heartedness of General Golz, the double-dealings, the lack of adequate supply of arms and ammunitions by the Russians and, above all, a general mismanagement of things finally led to the Republican failure. On the other hand, foreign volunteers like Robert Jordan, and the native civilians and peasants like Anselmo, Pilar and EL Sordo who fight and sacrifice their lives for the cause, add meaning and justification to the whole struggle. As Williams rightly comments, this set of characters, whom Robert Jordan represents, achieves a "spiritual triumph over material disaster" (141). Arthur Waldhorn observes that, with *For Whom the Bell Tolls* Hemingway breaks new ground and successfully creates "a promise of transcendence, a unifying and sustaining spirituality that binds not only all Spaniards but all men" (163).

The plot is simple. Robert Jordan an young American teacher is in Spain fighting along with the loyalist guerillas. His present and most important mission is to blow up a bridge which would be of great strategic importance during a loyalist offence three days hence. Nothing is important for him in his life nor the imminent danger of his death but just the bridge. His mission is to destroy the bridge. The protagonist Robert Jordan, his guide Anselmo and the guerilla leader Pablo make their entrances and the stage is set. The major theme here is the irony of life and of the relationship between the individuals, the little people for whose benefit wars are fought. The action of the novel is incredibly swift taking place within four days.

Robert Jordan is not just a teacher of Spanish and a lover of Spain, but also a writer, and he proposes to write a book on Spain when he is free. Therefore,
understandably, he looks upon Fascism as ‘the death of art’ (Baker, 259) and also as ‘the death of everything that the artist values and needs.’ (Baker, 259) Before the war he was an instructor in the University of Montana. But fighting for democracy against the Fascists, he has been sent on the mission of blowing up a bridge in Spain. Jordan lives and dies for this cause. His own death seems to be completely unimportant to him before his mission. He believes that if democracy fails in any country, the cause of democracy suffers throughout; therefore it is worth fighting for in any place. His mission gave him “a part in something in which he could believe in wholly and completely and in which he felt an absolute brotherhood with the others who were engaged in it.” His life loses all value before his mission. He seems to agree with Pilar who says: “For what are we born if not to aid one another?” Robert Jordan, during his three-day stay at Pablo’s, falls in love with Maria, who is also a girl ruined by the war. Before Jordan met Maria he had not wanted anything; but now he loves Maria as much as all that for which he is fighting. He plans and promises to take Maria to the Gaylords and Madrid after the war is over. But when the final day for action arrives, he is so absorbed in his “causes” that he finds Maria has no place in his life now. Finally, when he sees death overtaking him, he simply tells her: “We will not be going to Madrid,” (For Whom The Bell Tolls 481) Having lived his life for his cause, and having faced death heroically as its ultimate consequence, Robert Jordan has lived up to the value set by Hemingway. He has lived well and hopes to die well.

Robert Jordan, as he tells Maria, is not a communist, but an ‘anti-Fascist’. (For Whom The Bell Tolls 69) By profession, he is an instructor in Spanish at the University of Montana; he is an American, and so an expatriate, and yet he has been in Spain for over ten years before the outbreak of the Civil War in this country. He loves Spain, and tells Pilar: ‘there are no other countries like Spain.’(88)
Robert Jordan is a thin and tall young man with “sun-streaked fair hair, and a wind and sun-burned face” (For Whom The Bell Tolls 5). He comes to spend his vacations in Spain with a view to improve his Spanish. He never feels like a foreigner in Spain and his love for and loyalty to the republic is absolute and almost borders on fanaticism. When the civil war breaks out he fights for the republic as an American volunteer in order to contribute his best towards the welfare of Spain. He knows that whatever be the outcome of the war, he would like to see that what he loves in Spain is preserved. He is reluctant to give himself a political label except that of an anti-Fascist because his convictions are so different from those of the Russians who are conducting the war for the Republicans. Still he is committed to the political cause of the country. Jordan’s love for Spain is so overpowering that he does not desire to be labelled politically. He is a victim of his commitment because, good or bad, he is determined to accomplish the duty - blowing up the bridge – assigned to him.

The entire focus of the book is on the bridge which, as Jordan strongly believes, "can be the point on which the future of the human race can turn" (FWBT, 46). Thus, the issue is not confined to the Spanish Civil War alone. It is a symbolic presentation of the perpetual struggle going on everywhere in this world, between good and evil. People like Jordan rightly realize the issue, in its true perspective, and sustain their commitment till the last. When Jordan approaches Pablo, the latter tries to demoralize him by dismissing him as a foreigner.

Jordan meets this charge with complete detachment and conviction. He answers:

If I ask you to help me, you can refuse and I will find others who will help me. . . I have to do what I am ordered to do (18).
Jordan shows his firm commitment to the cause when he says:

That I am a foreigner is not my fault. I would rather have been born here (18).

The undiluted sincerity and commitment to a cause that Jordan considers to be ideal and worth pursuing shows the depth of his morals and the strength of his personality. He is further vulnerable to victimization because of his obsession with violence and death. All for his talk about social justice for the people of Spain he loves, his zeal to destroy the Fascists smacks of a denial of life. Still victory is assured for him when love comes to his rescue and he starts reasserting life. But he won’t swerve from his commitment. He makes the most of his last hours and accepts death with courage and stoic endurance.

Jordan’s primary concern is war and how to win it. If he fails in the pursuit everything is lost. He “gave absolute loyalty and a complete performance as he could give while he was serving. He is committed to fight for ‘liberty’, ‘dignity’ and rights for all men who work and not to be hungry. Karkov, the Russian Journalist, thinks that Jordan’s political education is meager but the Russian General Golz thinks very highly of him as a ‘partisan’ dynamiter and therefore gives him the most difficult assignment:

“Merely to blow the bridge is a failure.”

“Yes Comrade General.”

“To blow the bridge at a stated hour based on time set for the attack is how it should be done.

That is your right and how it should be done”

(For Whom The Bell Tolls 7)
Jordan’s absolute commitment to this tough assignment entraps him in the process of its execution. The uncertainty of the job makes it tougher and further hardens the course of his victimization. Jordan is expected to work with strangers and rely on them for the success of his assignment. The hostility of Pablo keeps Jordan on tenterhooks all the while, culminating in his shocking act of decamping with the detonators. But, despite all such giant obstacles Jordan carries out his assignment with complete grace and self-control. There is no certainty of the time to blow up the bridge or whether it would be required at all. In a whirlpool of uncertainty Jordan stands for certainty when he says with confidence, “It will start on time…” (For Whom The Bell Tolls 7) He is ready to take up any risk to justify the faith of General Golz in him.

Jordan is devoted so much to his voluntary service that he turns to be a sort of a masochist. “He was serving in war and he gave absolute loyalty and complete performance as he could give while he was serving”. The grip is further tightened when he says to himself, “Spain was your work and your job… so the demolition was a second and normal job too”. The protagonist is so much job-oriented that he is ready to follow orders without any judgment: “You follow orders. Follow them and don’t try to think beyond them”.

The first important symbol that we encounter in For Whom the Bell Tolls is the bridge which Robert Jordan, along with his companions, has to blow up; it is the centre of all attention, the hub of all activities, in the novel. Not unnaturally, the word ‘bridge’ finds mention for two hundred ninety-four times in the novel.

Robert Jordan tells himself:
And that is not the way to think… and there is not you, and there are no people that things must not happen to. Neither you nor this old man is anything. You are instruments to do your duty. There are necessary orders that are no fault of yours and there is a bridge and that bridge can be the point on which the future of the human race can turn, as it can turn on everything that happens in this war. You have only one thing to do and you must do it. (For Whom the Bell Tolls 46)

And, in a way, Pilar reciprocates Jordan’s attitude towards the bridge when she says; ‘I am for the Republic… And the Republic is the bridge.’ (For Whom The Bell Tolls 57) This bridge is not merely strategically vital for the Republicans as well as the Fascists in the Civil War; it is also important for mankind as a whole, for its blowing up would signify the victory of the Republican cause and the undoing of Fascism at one and the same time. The destruction of the bridge would result in a severe dislocation of the movement and demoralization of the Fascist forces. Judged from this point of view, the bridge may be looked upon as a symbol of freedom, of hope for the future of the human race itself. It is this microcosm-macrocosm dimension of the bridge that lends it its real significance.

The bridge controls and unifies the action of Hemingway’s. In one sense, it is the centre of a series of concentric circles; in another, it is the point toward which the elements of the plot coverage.’ (Baker 98)
Robert Jordan gives no importance to what may happen to him; he can, as General Golz puts it, “blow bridges very well”, and he makes his position very clear to Pablo when he tells him:

‘I come only for my duty… I come under orders from those who are conducting the war. If I ask you to help me, you can refuse and I will find others who will help me. I have not even asked you for help yet. I have to do what I am ordered to do and I can promise you of its importance. That I am a foreigner is not my fault. I would rather have been born here’.

(For Whom The Bell Tolls 18)

It is quite understandable that he thinks: ‘My obligation is the bridge, and to fulfil that I must take no useless risk of myself until I complete that duty.’ (For Whom The Bell Tolls 63)

We note that with determination and firm faith in discipline he succeeded in blowing up the bridge. The importance of the bridge is depicted right from the beginning but the bridge is described later on:

They came down the last two hundred yards, moving carefully from tree to tree, in the shadows and now, through the last pines of the steep hillside, the bridge was only fifty yards away. The late afternoon sun that still came over the brown shoulder of the mountain showed the bridge dark against the steep emptiness of the gorge. It was a steel bridge of a single emptiness of

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the gorge. It was a steel bridge of a single span and there was a sentry box at each end. It was wide enough for two motor-cars to pass, and it spanned, in solid flung metal grace, a deep gorge at the bottom of which, far below, a brook leaped in white water through rocks and boulders down to the mainstream of the pass.

(For Whom The Bell Tolls 38)

The bridge is made of steel and such other things, of which tanks, armoured vehicles and other weapons are made, while Spain and its people, in their ordinary homes remain unsafe. This brings us to the essential conflict between man and machine, between Nature and the technological civilization, as it is projected in the novel.

Further in the narrative, Robert Jordan and his men inspect this bridge from a close a distance as they could do so in the given situation, for it is the Fascists who control and guard it in order to be able to keep the Madrid-Valencia road open for the desired movement of their troops and mechanized weapons.

And though Jordan is seriously wounded and left alone among the pine-trees, he does have the immense satisfaction of completing his task. He speaks to himself; ‘I have fought for what I believed in for a year now. If we win here we will win everywhere. (For Whom The Bell Tolls 485)

Contrary to his expectations, Jordan is fatally wounded in his leg and lies immobile when the Fascist troops are chasing the guerrillas out of their hide-out. He had persuaded everyone to leave and covers the escape of the group with his machine gun till the Fascists arrived. During that brief period of time Jordan had undergone
excruciating pain, and had a bitter conflict in his mind whether to pull the trigger and put an end to his agonizing pain. But he soon restrained himself and said in an internal monologue:

No, it isn’t, because there is something you can do yet.

(For Whom The Bell Tolls 489)

To take stock of the developing scenario, we go back in time and see that Robert Jordan, an American Professor, presently a volunteer dynamiter in the Republican International militia in Spain, is dispatched with orders to blow a strategic bridge across the Fascist line. The blowing of the bridge is carefully scheduled to synchronize with a proposed crackdown on the Fascists. But, from the very beginning, things move unfavorably. Jordan, as per the instruction, is supposed to receive aid and advice from Pablo, a Republican guerrilla leader who camps close to the bridge. But Pablo, who is supposed to help the execution of the plan, goes against the very idea of blowing the bridge and puts his entire weight against Jordan's effort to fulfil the act. And finally, a few hours before the scheduled moment of crackdown, Pablo escapes with the detonators. This is not all that Jordan confronts in executing his assignment. During his three days’ camp there Jordan gets enough indication that the Fascists have already got the information about their proposed crackdown. In view of this situation the blowing of the bridge, the entire mobilization of the troops and the artillery, would fail to strike its target. So Jordan sends Andres, one of the guerrillas, to the area commander of the Republican army suggesting the calling off of the assault. But his message does not reach its destination owing to gross mismanagement and lack of co-ordination in the Army Head Quarters itself. Still, despite all such monstrous handicaps, obstacles. and tensions, Jordan finally (as he was instructed)
blows up the bridge at the scheduled hour. As the Republican attack becomes a failure, which Jordan knew much in advance, the Fascists make a prompt counter attack, chasing the guerrillas out of their hideout. Robert Jordan sustains a fatal injury in his leg as his horse falls down on it with all the weight rendering him immobile, and consequently chooses to stay behind alone to cover the escape of the guerrilla band with his machine-gun till the Fascist infantry arrives.

‘The bridge’, says Robert Jordan, ‘is a part of the plan to win the war’, (For Whom The Bell Tolls 265) and he believes that if the bridge is demolished, the Republicans can capture Segovia, the capital of a province. The bridge is at last blown up, and towards the end of the novel we do see the steel bridge rendered useless for traffic.

To this extent, Robert Jordan succeeds in performing his assigned duty. His [Robert Jordan’s] bridge is at the center of the history of holding actions; and although his problem is small in scale, it is so conceived and projected as to suggest ‘a struggle of epical dimensions.’ (For Whom The Bell Tolls 247)

The action of blowing up the bridge described in the novel took place in May 1937 in the Sierra of the province of Segovia. Hemingway himself had gone to all these places as a newspaper correspondent and there is hardly any doubt about the authenticity of this event. In addition, there are references to, and sometimes reconstruction of, other incidents, riots that took place on May 12, 1931, in which churches and convents were burned in Madrid and other Spanish cities. The guerrillas refer to them as “the start of the movement”. (For Whom The Bell Tolls 99) The assaults on the barracks of the Guardia Civil also occurred at many places.
It is indeed significant that *For Whom the Bell Tolls* begins and ends with ‘the pine-needle floor of the forest’. It opens with Robert Jordan, the dynamiter, whose mission is to blow the bridge, lying flat on the brown, pine-needled floor of the forest, "his chin on his folded arms"(3), watching the bridge. Later, the focus shifts from Jordan to the bridge and keeps on shifting between them, until both come into focus at once, as Jordan blows the bridge; and when the bridge is no longer there, the focus is there on Jordan at the end, as he lies behind the tree, "his heart beating against the pine-needle floor of the forest", (*For Whom The Bell Tolls* 471) watching Lt. Berrendo whom he is going to blow next. The two postures of Jordan at either end of the story indicate the usual structure of a Hemingway novel with a greater than usual attention given to it, which contributes to the structural perfection of *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. Baker explains:

The action of the story takes place in the vastness of a pine forest and the Guadarrama mountains. We are made aware of it at the commencement of the novel—the pine-needled floor of the forest, the wind blowing in the tops of the pine steepness below, the dark of the oiled road winding through the pass, the stream and the falling water of the dam. The vista is panoramic. We are not allowed to forget it at the end, when we come back to the vastness of the forest. Jordan feels his heart beat against its pine-needle floor. (Baker 245-46)

From time to time, the novel reverberates with the thunderous roar of the aeroplanes, that the Fascist aircraft bomb and destroy EI Sordo and his band, and that
Pablo and his people look at them, all awe-struck and terror-stricken, viewing them as the very agents of disaster and death. Even Robert Jordan, an American does not remain unaffected by them. As he and Anselmo are inspecting the bridge from a reasonably safe distance, they hear two kinds of noise, the first kind coming from the stream (Nature), the second from the aeroplanes (Machine),

‘The mountain-sanctuary’, observes Carlos Baker, ‘….is now shown to be open to invasion and destruction by the Fascist bombers, which the artist carefully establishes as symbols of the power of evil.’ (Baker 258) ‘Bombing planes and armored tanks should become… symbols for the enemy’ (Baker 95) and these symbols are limited for the simple and obvious reason that they ‘corresponded to the historical situation.’ (Baker 95) Significantly enough, Pilar calls these aeroplanes ‘the bad luck bird’ in her own native idiom. (For Whom The Bell Tolls 263)

From the gorge came the noise of the stream in the boulders. Then through this noise came another noise, a steady, racketing drone and they saw the sentry looking up, his knitted cap slanted back, and turning their heads and looking up they saw, high in the evening sky, three monoplanes in V formation, showing minute and silvery at that height where there still was sun, passing unbelievably quickly across the sky, their motors now throbbing steadily. (For Whom The Bell Tolls 41)

It is quite natural that these flying aircrafts compel Jordan to think of them and of the future:
The bombers were high now in fast, ugly arrow-heads beating the sky apart with the noise of their motors. They are shaped like sharks, Robert Jordan thought, the wide-finned, sharp-nosed sharks of the Gulf Stream. But these, wide-finned in silver, roaring, the light mist of their propellers in the sun, these do not move like sharks. They move like nothing there has ever been. They move like mechanized doom.

*(For Whom The Bell Tolls 82)*

It is quite meaningful that most of these aeroplanes come in threes. It is Robert Jordan who makes a pointed note of this number:

Lying on his back, he saw them, a Fascist patrol of three Fiats, tiny, bright, fast-moving across the mountain sky, headed in the direction from which Anselmo and he had come yesterday. The three passed and then came nine more, flying much higher in the minute, pointed formations of threes, and threes.

*(For Whom The Bell Tolls 79)*

Interestingly enough, while bombing El Sordo’s hideout, these planes come back thrice:

The planes came back three times and bombed the hilltop but no one on the hilltop knew it. Then the planes machine-gunned the hilltop and went away. As they dived on the hill for the last time with their
machine guns hammering, the first plane pulled up and
winged over and then each plane did the same and they
moved from echelon to V-formation and went away
into the sky in the direction of Segovia.

(For Whom The Bell Tolls 304)

The Fascists with their tanks and airpower symbolize doom to the Spanish
people. Their air-power is “the most awful symbol of doom.” (Baker 252) To Jordan,
the Fascist planes appears as “sharp-nosed sharks of the Gulf Stream.” (For Whom
The Bell Tolls 87) They are worse than natural disasters:

But these, wide-finned in silver, roaring, the light mist
of their propellers in the sun, these do not move like
sharks. They move like nothing there has ever been.
They move like mechanized doom.

(For Whom The Bell Tolls 92)

The poor Spanish people with their primitive ways and weapons are
ineffective against them. “The sight of these machines does things to one”, Pilar said,
“We are nothing against such machines.” (For Whom The Bell Tolls 89) They appear
like “Death” (For Whom The Bell Tolls 87) to Maria. These people are as helpless
against the Fascist military hardware as Maria was against her rapists. They give “the
sense of impotent humanity beneath omnipotent machines.” (Guttman 548)

In For Whom the Bell Tolls, there are a few other symbols and images of
appreciable relevance and importance. The wheel is one of them. In the tense quiet of
the evening, preceding the morning when the bridge has to be blown up as scheduled,
Robert Jordan, sitting inside Pablo’s cave, speculates on the prospects of his action, and it is in this context that he thinks of the wheel:

It was like a merry-go-round, Robert Jordan thought. Not a merry-go-round that travels fast and with a calliopes for music, and the children ride on cows with gilded horns, and there are rings to catch with sticks, and there is the blue, gas-flare-lit early dark of the Avenue du Maine, with fried fish sold from the next stall, and a wheel of fortune turning with the leather flaps slapping against the posts of the unnumbered compartments, and the packages of lump sugar piled in pyramids for prizes. No, it is not that kind of a merry-go-round: although the people are waiting, like the men in caps and the women in knitted sweaters, their heads bare in the gaslight and their hair shining, who stand in front of the wheel of fortune as it spins. Yes, those are the people. But this is another wheel. This is like a wheel that goes up and around.

*(For Whom The Bell Tolls 216)*

However, in spite of uncertainties and the danger of betrayal, Robert Jordan musters plenty of courage and boldness to keep himself off from this wheel:

There will be Pablo or there will be no Pablo. I care nothing about it either way. But I am not going to get on that wheel again. Twice I have been on that wheel
and twice it has gone around and come back to where it
started and I am taking no more rides on it.

*(For Whom The Bell Tolls 217)*

We may call it, for want of a better term, the ‘wheel of human conflict;’ (Baker 262) but whatever it is or may be, the turn of this wheel has ‘tragic implications.’ (Baker 262) In fact, the wheel symbolizes ‘the wheel-like turn of Spain’s tragedy’ (Baker 263) and suggests that ‘after all the agony and all the blood nothing should be settled, and that Spain should be back where it began, in a medieval situation.’ (Baker 263)

All the major characters we encounter in the novel are, in one way or another, closely connected with the bridge. The Chief of the demolition squad, Robert Jordan of the novel, is the very symbol of human freedom and dignity; Anselmo stands for strict commitment to duty in spite of his severe hatred for violence; Rafael represents irresponsible paganism; Pablo is a veritable Judas, a symbol of the canker of defeatism, one who is afraid to die; Pilar, in spite of all her faults, is an archetypal Mother, the very image of primitivism, compassion and courage, while Maria symbolizes a longing for home.

Jordan, a semi-autobiographical hero who speaks for the author, fought in the war because he loved Spain and “he believed in the Republic and that if it were destroyed life would be unbearable for all those people who believed in it. *(For Whom The Bell Tolls 163)* But Jordan did not have any politics. He believed in liberty, equality and fraternity. If he was under Communist discipline.. for the prosecution of the war.” *(For Whom The Bell Tolls 163)* Besides, there was also a sense of duty which attached him to the Loyalists : “It was a feeling of consecration to a duty
toward all the oppressed of the world” (For Whom The Bell Tolls 162) and that it gave “a part in something you could believe in wholly and completely and in which you felt in absolute brotherhood with the others who were engaged in it….  

(For Whom The Bell Tolls 162)

Death for Jordan who is fighting for a cause is valuable and full of meaning. A war changes man and causes him to realize the importance of time. It brings about a personal change and reveals much of man’s individuality and that time is limited. This is revealed by Maria and Robert Jordan, when Jordan is dying.

We begin to see and understand how we as people are never alone but are always surrounded by the memories, thoughts of those we love. Finally Jordan reveals how man is never an individual but instead made up of influences, experiences and memories. This change came over him as a consequence of joining the war which made him understand what it really meant to be a man. Jordan believes in life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness and for him life is not microscopic atomic but something bigger. The life that he leads is larger, broader and expansive. The very thought of the fall of the Republicans in Spain is like a nightmare to him. As he says:

If it were destroyed, life would be unbearable for all those who believed in it. (For Whom The Bell Tolls 98)

It is observed that, Hemingway “returns to become involved in mankind” (Josephs 177) Jordan shows a greatly positive response to life. He considers the world as a good place, worth fighting for. Jordan, has a strong reason and conviction:

I have fought for what I believed in for a year now. If we win here we will win everywhere

(For Whom The Bell Tolls 46)
Jordan’s conviction and his great commitment to a larger good is reflected in the following words. Jordan ruminates thus:

You have to put many things in abeyance to win a war. If this war is lost all of those things are lost.

*(For Whom The Bell Tolls 305)*

Jordan’s interior monologue shows his commitment to the cause and concern for his fellow-human beings.

Jordan does not want to run away to a better and a safer place or to negotiate a “separate peace”. He is not self-centered, his life is bored, liberated and highly altruistic.

Jordan, in every bit of his action, tries his best to further the cause of mankind at large. Before he dies, he reflects:

The world is a fine place and worth fighting for and

I have very much to leave it.

*(For Whom The Bell Tolls 485)*

This shows his positive attitude to life and his realization of the inherent truth in it.

The end is not protracted but comes swiftly. Jordan follows the orders and succeeds in destroying the bridge, though the losses are heavy, and, much beyond his anticipation. He is badly wounded and death is certain for him. Yet he brings all the difference to it (which would have been otherwise a victimization) by his graceful acceptance of it. Death, he asks, where is thy sting? And he wins over death by yielding to it not as a man committed to death and destruction but as one committed to
life and love. He has lived a full life of seventy years in just seventy hours. At the hour of death Jordan’s love for Maria and the Republic is complete. His faith in the sustaining force of love is rendered all the more unshakable with the knowledge that he is to bid adieu to life soon. So he does not die in death as he shares his life with Maria and goes on to live in her: “Thou wilt go, rabbit. But I go with thee. As long as there is one of us there is both of us”. (*For Whom The Bell Tolls* 481)

Gravely wounded, Robert Jordan waits for the enemy to come, knowing he will not survive. He has sent Maria away and wishes to die alone:

> He looked down the hill slope again and he thought. I hate to leave it, is all. I hate to leave it very much and I hope I have done some good in it. I have tried to with what talent I had. Have, you mean. All right, have. I have fought for what I believed in for a year now. If we win here we will win everywhere. The world is a fine place and worth the fighting for and I hate very much to leave it. And you had a lot of luck, he told himself, to have had such a good life.

(*For Whom The Bell Tolls* 485)

Jordan gracefully endures his physical pain which is beyond common human endurance. He is without regret or despair. While waiting to kill Lieutenant Berrendo and for death he lies content on the brown pine needle floor of the forest that at last he is going to live in Maria and in the republic; that he has found a real cause to die for. Perhaps there could not be a more glorious death and only a victor and a victor alone deserves it.
For Hemingway dying well is equal to living well. So Robert Jordan in *For Whom the Bell Tolls* fights off an impulse to kill himself in order to end his anguish of a badly broken leg, and avoid possible capture. He tells himself: “You can do nothing for yourself but you can do something for another.” Jordan has a cause for which he lives. Before the war he was an instructor in Spanish in the University of Montana. But fighting for democracy against the Fascists, he has been sent on the mission of blowing up a bridge in Spain. Jordan lives and dies for this cause. His own death seems to be completely unimportant to him before his mission. He believes that if democracy fails in any country, the cause of democracy suffers throughout; therefore it is worth fighting for in any place. His mission gave him “a part in something in which he could believe in wholly and completely and in which he felt an absolute brotherhood with the others who were engaged in it. His life loses all value before his mission. He seems to agree with Pilar who says: “For what are we born if not to aid one another?” Robert Jordan, during his three-day stay at Pablo’s, falls in love with Maria, who is also a girl ruined by the war. Before Jordan met Maria he had not wanted anything; but now he loves Maria as much as all that for which he is fighting. He plans and promises to take Maria to the Gaylords and Madrid after the war is over. But when the final day for action arrives, he is so absorbed in his “cause” that he finds Maria has no place in his life now. Finally, when he sees death overtaking him, he simply tells her: “We will not be going to Madrid.” Having lived his life for his cause, and having faced death heroically as its ultimate consequence, he has lived up to the value set by Hemingway. He has lived well and hopes to die well.

The Spanish Civil War in *For Whom The Bell Tolls* provides an ironical situation in that the Loyalists and Fascists fight against each other and destroy Spain in the name of saving it and its values. The former accuse the latter of inhuman
atrocities and massacres while they themselves are not less guilty. E.M. Halliday calls it ‘the ironical self-destruction which is civilized warfare.’ Robert Jordan, who said that he has "no time for girls", finds that in the three-day period, Maria and his desire to live become almost as much the matter of his concern as the blowing of the bridge. Pablo, leader of a Loyalist guerrilla band, steals the detonator and hinders the blowing of the bridge while he is expected to do otherwise. Agustin, a guerrilla on guard, demands the second half of the password from Robert Jordan, while he himself does not know the first half. Rafael, the gypsy, in place of noting the movement of military vehicles, goes to shoot rabbits. Baker calls this "the wheel-like turn of Spain's tragedy, indeed, that after all that agony and all the blood, nothing should be settled, and that Spain should be back where it began, in a medieval situation.”

But Hemingway did not have a blind faith in the Republic. If he had noticed the barbarism of fascists, their indiscriminate shootings and rapings, he also clearly saw the barbarity of those who were fighting against that barbarism. He found the Spanish people to be brave, fearless and dignified but also no less cruel, irresponsible and barbarous. Whether Fascists or Loyalists, they remained blood-thirsty and revengeful. While the novel leans to the Loyalist’s side, Hemingway has not spared them when they committed atrocities against the local people in the name of the Revolution and Republic. Robert Jordan ruminates: “There is no finer and no worse people in the world. No kinder and cruder. Forgiveness is a Christian idea and Spain has never been a Christian country.” (For Whom The Bell Tolls 365)

Hemingway is equally critical of the Spanish leaders. They were also irresponsible and full of vanity, and many times as deceitful as the people themselves. Jordan is highly critical of Pablo as well as many other leaders of the Spanish people.
“Any leader they have will muck them,” he thought. “Muck all the insane, egotistifcal, treacherous swine that have always governed Spain and ruled her armies.” *(For Whom The Bell Tolls 370)*

In a wonderful passage Jordan reports the troubled thoughts of an aged guerrilla, Anselmo:

“The coming of the dark always made [Anselmo] feel lonely and tonight he felt so lonely that there was a hollowness in him as of hunger. In the old days he could help this loneliness by the saying of prayers and often coming home from hunting he would repeat a great number of the same prayer and it made him feel better. But he had not prayed once since the movement. He missed the prayers but he thought it would be unfair and hypocritical to say them and he did not wish to ask any favors or for any different treatment than all the men were receiving. ..” *(For Whom The Bell Tolls 205)*

Anselmo continues, speaking to himself:

“I am lonely in the day when I am not working when the dark comes it is a time of great loneliness. But one thing I have that no man nor any God can take from me and that is that I have worked well for the Republic. I have worked hard for the good that we will all share later. I have worked my best from the first of the movement and I have done nothing that I am ashamed of.” *(For Whom The Bell Tolls 205)*

“All that I am sorry for is the killing. But surely there will be an opportunity to atone for that because for a sin of that sort that so many bear, certainly some just relief will be devised.” *(For Whom The Bell Tolls 206)*

After a while Anselmo returns to this thought, for it is very much on his mind:
“I wish there were a penance for it that one could commence now because it is the only thing that I have done in all my life that makes me feel badly when I am alone. All the other things are forgiven or one had a chance to atone for them by kindness or in some decent way. But I think this of the killing that it must be a very great sin and I would like to fix it up. Later on there may be certain days that one can work for the state or something that one can do that will remove it. It will probably be something that one pays as in the days of the Church, he thought and smiled. The Church was well organized for sin.” (For Whom The Bell Tolls 206)

To balance the struggle of conscience in this innocent old man, Hemingway records a debate between Anselmo and Agustin, a peasant guerrilla who is completely unforgiving of the enemy. It comes at the end of a conversation which Robert Jordan is leading.

‘But look, Roberto’, Agustin said. ‘They say the government moves further to the right each day. That in the Republic they no longer say Comrade but Senor and Senora…. Are we to win the war and lose the revolution?’

‘Nay’, Robert Jordan said. ‘But if we do not win this war there will be no revolution nor any Republic nor any thou or any me or anything but the most grand carajo.’ (For Whom The Bell Tolls 295)

In the later didactic conversation, Karkov explains to Robert Jordan the meaning of the miniature civil war within the Civil War that was caused by the Anarcho-Syndicalist week-long rising in Barcelona.

He speaks of the Stalinist communists, of whom Karkov was one, Trotskyites were as great an enemy as were fascists, if not greater, since the Trotskyites claimed that they were the authentic communists and the Soviet Stalinists inauthentic.
“Barcelona makes you laugh.”

“What about the P.O.U.M. putsch?” (For Whom The Bell Tolls 255)

“The P.O.U.M was never serious. It was a heresy of crackpots and wild men and it was really just an infantilism. There were some honest misguided people. There was one fairly good brain and there was a little fascist money. Not much. The poor P.O.U.M. They were very silly people.”

“How many were killed in the putsch?”

It is to Hemingway’s enormous credit that despite his obvious ideological slant, he describes the horrors of the Spanish Civil War on both sides. Here he is in his element. There is no question of phoniness. His account of the killing by Loyalist guerrillas of four town dignitaries believed to have fascist sympathisers is as follows:

“Then let us kneel”, the first civil said, and the four knelt looking very awkward with their heads against the wall and their hands by their sides, and Pablo passed behind them and shot each in turn in the back of the head with the pistol, going from one to another and putting the barrel of the pistol against the back of their heads, each man slipping down as he fired. I can hear the pistol still, sharp and yet muffled, and see the barrel jerk and the head of the man drop forward. One held his head forward and pressed his forehead against the stone. One shivered in his whole body and his head was shaking. Only one put his hands in front of his eyes, and he was the last one, and the four bodies were
slumped against the wall when Pablo turned away from
them and came toward us with the pistol still in his
hand. *(For Whom The Bell Tolls 107)*

Reading Pilar’s account of the massacre of the leading citizens of a town one
realizes that although she had witnessed the spectacle with cold fascination, her
humanity was revealed in the disgust which assailed her from time to time. Pilar has
led a hard life and yet “her heart still beats for humankind even when the head coldly
admits the need for violent activity against the enemy.”

Agustin, Fernando, Eladio, Primitivo and Andres are all ready to fight for the
cause of the Republic and to die for it; Agustin and Andres do whatever they could to
assist Robert Jordan in the accomplishment of his task. Fernando, is ‘a stiff and
pedantic person, but the soul of loyalty and courage’, he is ‘brave and firm, and can
be relied on to perform whatever duty requires.’ Agustin tells, Pilar : ‘To make war all
you need is intelligence. But to win you need talent and material.’

*(For Whom The Bell Tolls 93)*

The action takes place within four days, and yet we have the forceful drama of
an impending battle and its shadows on the lives of a number of men and women. The
scenes and the action lie within the small area of the Guadarrama Hills, and these
features of its construction remind us of the writers of classical tragedy. The eye of
the novelist merely sees what takes place here and now. There is no accompanying
comment of the author; he is not present at all; there is nothing but the action. The
bridge and its destruction is the focal point of it all and the other events are like so
many concentric circles around this central circle of the bridge.
The bridge brings Robert Jordan nearer to many lives - Pablo, Pilar, Anselmo, Andres and Maria. Through the eventful four days, Hemingway uses frequent flashbacks to provide as much of the background as he can. Almost all his characters retrospect and recount the past events. Much of the poignancy of the lives depends upon the recounting by the victims themselves. We must appreciate the function of these incursions into the past for the novel’s fullness and breadth. Though the writing technique pretends that the novel never takes its eyes off the action of the bridge, we are actually told a great deal besides. Through Jordan’s reminiscence in the first chapter, we are put in possession of the strategy of Golz’s attack on the pass, which makes the blowing up of the bridge so important. Our views are again enlarged when Jordan talks about Madrid and about the luxurious “Hotel Gaylord” where the Russians forge the Republicans’ strategy and the way the men at the top operate the military machine. First the bridge, then the attack of which the bridge is a part, then the war itself of which the attack is a simple move the novel’s reference expands in concentric circles. Nor is the width of political reference the only thing that is obtained by the device of flash-back. Pilar’s vivid account of how the fascists were killed with flails and pitchforks at the beginning of the movement reflects extreme violence.

Hemingway could easily have presented the guerillas as heroes, as there was very real heroism to be found among them. The example can be the death of El Sordo. But the writer has made them very life-like; he has revealed the desperate resistance offered by the partisans as a human drama and, in doing this, he has lifted the Spanish Tragedy from the abstract realm of statistics figures of casualties and other war losses to the realm of human tragedy, to the level of the innumerable personal tragedies invariably produced by war.
The most elastic of all Hemingway's novels in texture and structure, *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, has a story which moves back and forth, into the past and the future, even as it moves across forests and mountains, and travels great distances. But the actual story occupies a span of less than three days. The intensity of the story and the technical excellence, which takes us across distances in time and space and packs the experience of a number of years into less than three days, give us the impression that Hemingway has moved through algebra into calculus in this novel itself. The highly skilful foreshortening of time and the unity of place are important characteristics of this novel. The technique of flash-back to tell the part of the story concerning the past and that of entering different consciousnesses is used here. The device of foreshortening of time, and the frequent shifts of point of view which mark *To Have and Have Not* are used here with great success.

*For Whom the Bell Tolls* evinces great control in manipulation of the technique of point of view. The main point of view is third-person “oblique” with Robert Jordan serving as the central intelligence or "reflector", for the most part. But wherever necessary the "implied author", who has a superior knowledge, makes comments and gives information, which the character in question cannot do. This can be noticed in the scene in which Anselmo keeps watch over the road. The author from his point of view, slightly above Anselmo's and closer to the object, tells us about things which the old man does not know. A little later, the scene shifts from Anselmo and the road to the inside of the saw mill and the soldiers' talk, and back to Anselmo again. The shift, back and forth, is smooth, since we are conscious of a superior point of view operating, using both summary and scene for effective narration. The seeing eye is with somebody in the book, but its vision is reinforced; the picture contains more, becomes richer and fuller, because it is the author's as well as his creature's,
both at once. In fact there are two brains behind that eye; and one of them is the author's, who adopts and shares the 'position' of his creature, and at the same time supplements his wit.

Interior monologues are used to a much greater advantage. They not only present the character's thought processes and throw light on his character, memories and dreams, but reveal some of the basic ironic patterns reflecting the vanity of human plans and efforts. Robert Jordan's belief that "the bridge can be the point on which the future of the human race can turn" (For Whom The Bell Tolls 43) is finally reduced to total insignificance in the context of the war, and all the efforts and the sacrifices involved in blowing it are in vain. Jordan's interior monologues help in bringing out the tragedy of the story—a tragedy of which he seems to be aware throughout. It is a tragedy of action unlike the first two novels which are tragedies of helplessness. Right from the beginning Jordan has his fears that the attack is doomed to failure, being aware of the composition of the Republican leadership. But he is a disciplined soldier and his business is to carry out his orders. "Neither you nor this old man is anything. You are instruments to do your duty. There are necessary orders that are no fault of yours and there is a bridge and that bridge can be the point on which the future of the human race can turn. As it can turn on everything that happens in this war" (For Whom The Bell Tolls 43). The tragedy is Jordan's personal tragedy at the primary level, and involves Golz's attack and the Spanish civil war at the secondary level. Jordan's personal tragedy and Golz's attack may form part of the general picture of the tragedy of the Spanish war. But the dramatic focus in the novel is on Golz's attack in general and Jordan's involvement with the bridge, with the guerilleros, and with Maria in particular. Whatever may be said about the Spanish civil war in general is only incidental and is of secondary importance. Pilar's account of Republican
brutality and Maria's account of Falangist brutality are couched in flash-back narration as unpleasant memories and do not form part of the onward-moving narrative. Jordan's interior monologues are all purposive and contribute to the total effect. Even his memories of the Gaylord's and Karkov, besides giving us an idea of the international complexion of the civil war, show the importance of people like Karkov, which has a special significance in the context of Andres' mission. Later on Karkov helps Andres overcome the frustrating obstacles put in his way by Andre Massart.

Here we find Hemingway take a personal interest in his characters as people with lives and views of their own, apart from their hand in contributing to the total effect of a novel. The minds of important characters are given a great deal of importance, and at the end, his understanding of the story becomes one with the reader's, so that the 'tragic irony the discrepancy between the hero's understanding of his misfortune and the audience's understanding of it is resolved. The reader has no trouble in identifying himself satisfactorily with Jordan through shared humanity.

Hemingway's interest in the 'characters and lives of his people can be seen in his attempt to justify Maria's character by making Jordan comment, "Spanish girls make wonderful wives" (For Whom The Bell Tolls 172), and,' later,' in his making Maria dwell with a sense of pride on her mother's death. Her father shouts:

"Viva la Republica" when they shot him, but her mother shouted ‘Viva my husband who was the Mayor of this village’, when they shot her, and this was in my head like a scream that would not die but kept on and on (For Whom The Bell Tolls 364)? Even minor characters like Golz, Anselmo, Pilar, Pablo, Karkov, Lt. Berrendo, and El Sordo are presented with a lively interest in their humaneness.
The emotional rhythm in the novel depends upon the alternation, of tension in the progress of action. The tension rises higher and higher after each spell of relief until the parallel action of Andres' mission commences, from which point the tension keeps on rising on both the planes till the end, and is at its highest as Jordan lies waiting for Lt. Berrendo to come into the sights of his machine-gun.

Apart from the emotional structure of the narrative, it is interesting to observe the building-up of tension in a character's mind, which may be characterized as psychological tension, as he waits for, or is engaged in an important action. As Jordan waits for the sound of bombing in order to commence his work on the bridge and as his psychological tension starts mounting, his senses become sharp. “He watches the movement of a squirrel. He would like to have had the squirrel with him in his pocket. He would like to have had anything that he could touch. He rubbed his elbows against the pine needles but it was not the same.” (For Whom The Bell Tolls 433). Without mentioning it, Hemingway indicates the nervous tension preceding serious action, especially during a wait. He sees a motor-cyclist and, some time later, an ambulance crossing the bridge. He smells the pines, hears the stream, and sees the bridge clear and beautiful in the morning light. "He lay there behind the pine tree, with the submachine gun across his left forearm, and he never looked at the sentry box again until, long after it seemed that it was never coming, that nothing could happen on such a lovely late morning, he heard the sudden, clustered, thudding of the bombs.” (For Whom The Bell Tolls 434). The onomatopoeic "thudding" with its significant double 'd' is preceded by long phrases signifying time hanging heavy, especially the heavy parenthesis "with the sub-machine gun across his left forearm". As Jordan draws in a long breath and lifts the sub-machine gun "from where it lay", the tension is lifted. He looks at the man in the sentry box who stands in the road "with the sun shining on
him". In a six-sentence description of the man 'the sun' recurs three times. This makes us conscious of the slightly higher view of the omniscient narrator who wants us to know that the sun shines on the sentry for the last time now, though the point of view is ostensibly Jordan's.

As Jordan works under the bridge, tension mounts higher and higher without any prospect of relaxation. The pressure on his mind also reaches an unbearable point, and he starts shaking like "a goddamn woman". He has to take his mind off the job for some time to calm himself and here we have a free-associative interior monologue which reflects the under-current of psychological build-up. "Roll, Jordan. Roll! They used to yell that at football when you lugged the ball.... This is a place here under this bridge. A home away from home. .. As Maine goes so goes the nation. As Jordan goes so go the bloody Israelites. The bridge, I mean. As Jordan goes, so goes the bloody bridge, other way round, really" (For Whom The Bell Tolls 438).

The moments of excruciating pain in the course of this monologue are given in italics. Summary and scene (or picture and drama) are both skilfully used in these pages. Jordan, summoning up all his energies to suppress his pain, says: "And if you wait and hold them up even a little while or just get the officer that may make all the difference. One thing well done can make—" (For Whom The Bell Tolls 489). The narrator then tells us that Jordan "lay very quietly and tried to hold on to himself" (For Whom The Bell Tolls 490), and that his luck held very good because he saw, just then, the cavalry ride out of the timber and cross the road:

As the officer came trotting now on the trail of the horses of the band he would pass twenty yards below where Robert Jordan lay. At that distance there would
be no problem. The officer was Lieutenant Berrendo. He had come up from La Granja when they had been ordered up after the first report of the attack on the lower post. . . . Robert Jordan lay behind the tree, holding onto himself very carefully and delicately to keep his hands steady. He was waiting until the officer reached the sunlit place where the first trees of the pine forest joined the green slope of the meadow. He could feel his heart beating against the pine needle floor of the forest (For Whom The Bell Tolls 490).

The narrator's summary about Lt. Berrendo renders the scene very meaningful. The final confrontation between Robert Jordan and Lt. Berrendo, the two men in the story with whom we greatly sympathize, stress the Donnean paradox which governs the framework of the novel: "And therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee". It tolls for Lt. Berrendo as well as for Robert Jordan, for the Fascist, well as for the Republican, for the victor as well as for the vanquished, because they are both "involved in Mankinде". The minor ironies in the novel like that of Joaquin, who quotes Pasionaria's slogan that "it is better to die on your feet than to live on your knees", but switches in the end to a prayer to Virgin Mary as the drone of the planes approaches, and dies on his knees (For Whom The Bell Tolls 321), and that of Captain Mora, who shouts "Shoot me! Kill me!" and strides up the hill only to join El Sordo and his friends as a "comrade voyager" (For Whom The Bell Tolls 317-319), subserve this larger paradox that "any man's death diminishes me", which is supplemented by the other important paradox in the novel, "As long as there is one of us there is both of us.” (For Whom The Bell Tolls 481)
*For Whom The Bell Tolls* is not about Spanish politics but about the fate of the Republic and its people caught up in the civil war. *For Whom The Bell Tolls*, in a rather loose sense is a historical and political novel, since it is based on a small episode in the history of the Spanish Civil War. Hemingway has transformed the novel about the Spanish Civil War into a parable of the artist and his survival in a fascist world, and of the virgin Spanish earth being exploited and ravaged by the virgin industrial and war machines. The tragedy of the bridge becomes the tragedy of the Spanish earth and its people. Hemingway does this as in other novels by moving “his stories away from fiction toward fable away from a concern with the concrete and the particular toward the universal and the symbolic.”
WOKS CITED


