CHAPTER IV

For Whom the Bell Tolls

Immediately after the publication of For Whom the Bell Tolls, it is considered the most acclaimed novel of Hemingway. The New York Times termed For Whom the Bell Tolls, “the best book Ernest Hemingway has written and one of the major novels in American Literature” (Web). The novel’s affirmative quality, especially compared to his earlier works, the suspense of the main character’s mission and the moving and dramatic love story makes it a phenomenal success in literature. For Whom the Bell Tolls was a critical success as well as an enormous best-seller. It is undoubtedly considered Hemingway’s best novel. To quote Dorothy Parker “It is a great thing to see a fine writer grow finer before your eyes. For Whom the Bell Tolls is, and beyond all comparison, Ernest Hemingway’s finest book” (315).

For Whom the Bell Tolls, is Hemingway’s first full length novel with a new approach to life marked by a new narrative technique and style. Almost all the critics are unanimous in acknowledging this fact. Robert Sherwood calls it : “a work of art” (166). Joseph Warren Beach gives an exhaustive assessment of the novel : “This novel is the largest in scope, the most accomplished in technique and the strongest in effect of anything he has written” (48). With For Whom the Bell Tolls there is a clear departure of Hemingway’s changing response to life in general which effected a corresponding change in the narrative technique and style.

Howard Mumford Jones focuses on style and states “here manner has been replaced by style and the mere author has died out in the artist” (316). It takes a very talented writer to bring a work of fiction to life. Every single detail must have some minimal degree of appropriateness for the author to include in his work and this is especially true for Ernest Hemingway in the case of For Whom the Bell Tolls. It remains a moving novel with some of his best characters, best descriptions of action and most memorable passages. Mark Schorer credits Hemingway’s style for making him famous and says:
The style which made Hemingway famous—with its ascetic suppression of
ornament and figure, its insistence on the objective and the unreflective, its
habit of understatement, the directness and the brevity of its syntactical
constructions, its muscularity, the sharpness of its staccato and repetitive
effects, the purity of its live under the maximum of exposure that is, its
continued poise under the weight of event or feeling-this style is an exact
transfiguration of Hemingway’s moral attitude toward a peculiarly violent and
chaotic experience. His style, in effect, is what he had instead of God. (103)

Hemingway remains extraordinary among his contemporary prose writers. His
primary themes have been violence and crudity of war and yet he has managed to
depict all that commotion in a perfectly composed prose. Lawrence R. Broer also
asserts about his terse writing style and somewhat finds his reporting skills as great
contributors in that. Broer says :

Hemingway’s famous understated style in the author’s reports to NANA (the
North America Newspaper Alliance), paradoxically objective and subjective,
shows us how the demands of reporting and Hemingway’s fictional gifts work
as one : pithy, incongruous juxtaposition that highlight the grotesqueness of
battle. Hemingway’s stark, unsentimental prose shocks us with horrors in the
midst of the commonplace. It challenges us as gruesome photographs do, our
repulsion to the obscene violence clashing with our appreciation of its
perfected expression. (Web)

The action of the novel covers a span of seventy two hours only and
Hemingway renders all his experiences of Spain, its people and of the war going on
there, within this very time frame. Hemingway’s earlier works are invariably affected
by symptoms like nihilism, skepticism, ego and sentimentality which Robert Jordan,
the protagonist of For Whom the Bell Tolls, successfully overcomes. The novel is
actually grounded in and informed by Hemingway’s own visit to war-torn Spain.
Howard Mumford Jones calls the novel epic and says : “Hemingway has done for the
Spanish Civil War the sort of thing that Tolstoy did for the Napoleonic campaigns in *War and Peace* the reader has not lived in Spain, he has lived Spain” (317).

Symbolism remains one of the most significant features of Hemingway prose. Baker traces the symbolism in *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. Baker ruminates about a range of symbols like plain, mountain, home-concept and certain other mystical symbols like, significance of number three as a symbol. Baker extends his views on number three as a symbol used in *For Whom the Bell Tolls* and in this connection he says:

Hemingway’s linking of the modern bombers with the ancient magic-symbol of number three greatly enhances the emotional effectiveness of the plane-passage (304). The old epics and the great dramatic tragedies could employ supernatural agents in the full expectation that they would intensify the emotions of pity and terror in the spectator. The rise of naturalism, and the partial decay of superstition, denied the tragic artist direct access to one of his most evocative instruments. Yet within the shadowy subconscious, the perennial human capacity for fear and awe remained to be touched by any artist who could empower new symbols with old terrors. (254)

With the use of symbols, Hemingway has transformed the novel about the Spanish Civil War into a parable of the artist and his survival in fascist world, and of the virgin Spanish earth being exploited and ravaged by the cruel industrial and war machines. Hemingway believed in understatements and in using minimum words to achieve the maximum effect. Symbolism as well as irony both serve the purpose as both carry more meaning than their surface appearance. Irony commonly and clearly appears in most of the titles of Hemingway’s works. It is also present, in the body of work and in narrative as well, Hemingway has used both symbolism and irony successfully and made them serve his artistic purpose well.

The Spanish Civil War in *For Whom the Bell Tolls* provides the most significant ironical situation in which the loyalists and the fascists fight against each
other and destroy Spain in the name of saving it and its values. E.M. Halliday calls it: “the ironical self destruction which is civilized warfare” (19). In *For Whom the Bell Tolls* the symbolism and Irony merge together to imply deep meanings and metaphysical implications.

The dialogue of the novel particularly gets itched into the mind of the reader. The conversations are literally Spanish with a combination of dignity, rhetorical precision and wild poetry. It is also rich in curses. A huge part of vitality of *For Whom the Bell Tolls* lies in the imaginative force of its dialogues. He reproduced the speech of people who are not English in *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, he renders their words in an ingenious translated English which reminds the reader that they are actually speaking in Spanish.

Within the web of his writing style and skill which is embedded with symbols, images, irony and dialogue, critics have also traced the use of humor to ease out the tensions and horrors of war. Sheldon Norman Gerbstein had paid some attention to humor but he remains preoccupied with structure, language and other narrative aspects. It is S.P.S Dahiya’s book that traces the elements of humor in Hemingway’s works that individually and particularly focuses on humor. Dahiya quotes on *For Whom the Bell Tolls*: “Since, *For Whom the Bell Tolls* presents a picture of chaos, ruin and brutality, the compulsion of the characters to laugh and joke becomes all the more urgent … use of humor in Hemingway’s war tragedies, functions as a defense mechanism for the characters to release tensions. Such pertinent need to joke often arises in the writer’s war tragedies as the characters remain caught up in a situation of unrelieved tension and are put to the wall to survive on their own resources for offsetting the corroding tension” (119).

Hemingway’s modification of his usual writing style in no way detracts from the artistic merits of the novel. As Edmund Wilson says: “This book is a new departure for Hemingway. It is Hemingway’s first attempt to compose a full-length novel, with real characters and a built-up story” (91). In the novel, Hemingway has achieved a true union of passion and reason.
Another significant and striking feature of the novel that stands out, is the use of violence. In the novel, Hemingway gets a chance to expatiate on the sum total of his entire experiences and portrays the atrocities of the war in its ugliest and most dreadful shape. Philip Young’s observation of the use of violence is a representative one: “The entire novel is impregnated with the atmosphere of violent extinction of life. Corpse is piled on corpse and the tendency towards death is steered on its long way by the novelist who offers up one body after another to mark the route” (96).

The novel is not merely a catalogue of crude violent actions; the psychological implications of violence are brought out vividly with the insight of an artist and the exactness of a scientist. All violent actions arise mostly from the need of seeking deliverance from the distress or anxiety caused by psychic wounds. Arturo Barea regards the novel as “a tale of violence, war and love, blood and thunder and the Spanish soil that shows the inner problems of the author through his hero” (350).

Allen Guttman considers the symbolic opposition between man and machine to be the central issue in his essay, Mechanized Doom. Guttman says: “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 antithetical values of an aggressive and destructive mechanical order” (98).

One of the most sought after point of concern remains the hero of Hemingway’s works. To abide by the code-hero norms, to provide the author psychic relief and to even be the author’s fictional projection – the hero of Hemingway has always been the subject of close scrutiny, discussion and even the central concern. Philip Young relates Robert Jordan to the writer himself. Young argues about “Jordan’s age and relates him to the author” (83). Cooperman finds the hero “Jordan’s character to be juxtaposed with Anselmo and Pablo” (95).

Bhim S. Dahiya, in a very exhaustive study of the nature of Hemingway’s heroes differs from all the pre-conceived notions of code-hero and autobiographical approaches. Dahiya maintains that the hero is mainly concerned with the fate of human society. In case of For Whom the Bell Tolls, Dahiya asserts that, “Jordan
fulfills his duty of blowing up the bridge despite his disenchantment with the Republican management of war. It is also important to note that the hero’s disillusionment is always with the military and social establishments and never with the cause that he is fighting for …. He repeatedly involves himself in the larger social issues” (139).

Michael K. Solow also traces the significance of hero in *For Whom the Bell Tolls* and praises Hemingway’s art of bringing out the gist of war and its brutal effects in the novel. Solow asserts: “At the center of the novel, we live and die by the side of Robert Jordan, an honorable outsider who is paradoxically both hero and victim, a man who sacrifices himself for a just cause in spite of every reason, including love and betrayal, to abandon it. In *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, Hemingway tells a cautionary tale for his age and all ages: that we must abhor war, only pursue it in the most extreme, most justified of circumstances, and even then zealously guard ourselves against its corrupting evils” (Web).

*For Whom the Bell Tolls* remains author’s most acclaimed work. As Allen Josephs puts it: “Long after the politics and the particulars of the war itself are forgotten, readers will still be moved by the story of Robert Jordan and Maria and the band of guerillas who attempt to blow a bridge on which the future of the human race could turn” (11). *For Whom the Bell Tolls* remains Hemingway’s most famous novel, the novel instantly became a Book-of-the-Month Club choice and was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize and as Meyers also described the novel that “it triumphantly re-established Hemingway’s literary reputation” (338).

Hemingway had an enduring love for Spain and the Spanish people. Ernest Hemingway wrote about many places—France, Italy, Key West, East Africa etc. but no place made an impact on him as a writer or as a person that Spain did. It thereby becomes important to get the idea of Hemingway’s knowledge of Spain, Spanish Civil War, the people of Spain and their relation with it all.

Although Hemingway had fondness and admiration for European countries like France and Italy, his true and emotional choice, even mystical attraction had always been to Spain. When Hemingway traveled to Spain, he felt like being in his
own home, for Spain, was for him more than a friendly country, was the place that served him as inspiration, enlightenment and even purification. He liked the individualistic nature and the rebelliousness of the Spaniards, he liked the wisdom of the language of the people and the warmth they offered him.

Hemingway traveled to Spain many times just to watch numerous corridas (bullfights). However in 1937, he returned as a correspondent to cover the Spanish Civil War. Hemingway was a staunch supporter of the Republican troops during the war. These Spanish experiences served as a fodder for numerous short stories and also for the novel *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, which was published in 1940. His interest in war as a subject and his love of first hand experience as an object served as a basic foreground for the inspiration that went into writing his masterpiece *For Whom the Bell Tolls*.

Hemingway made one more short-trip to Spain before he settled down to sort out the spoils of the war and rearrange them on paper creatively. He had foreseen the fall of the Republic for which he blamed the corrupt and treacherous politicians. However, he was all praise for the courageous commanders and the volunteers in the International Brigades who had staked everything, they had any claim to, in the defense of the Republic. As a writer Hemingway was conscious of his duty to write of what he had seen in Spain, rising above the propaganda and party politics, of human beings who had been affected by the war, of events and things impartially and realistically. The truth of the matter is that he had observed the carnival of treachery and rottenness on both sides of the conflict. And as a true artist Hemingway refused to take sides when he came to write of this war in his novel, *For Whom the Bell Tolls*.

*For Whom the Bell Tolls* is Hemingway’s most ambitious novel in which he tried to express his emotions for Spain and all he had observed in that country for over fifteen years. Hemingway presents a geographical map of Spain based on his excellent knowledge about the country; the hills, mountains, passes, the location of roads and hotels. He captured the spirit of the war, as well as the primitive life of the guerrillas, their customs, traditions, ways of life, their sense of honor and duty, their obedience and faithfulness, their superstitions and rituals. While writing *For Whom
the Bell Tolls, Ernest Hemingway reflected on the task in a letter to his Russian translator, the literary critic Ivan Kashkin:

…. in stories about the [Spanish Civil] war I try to show all the different sides of it, taking it slowly and honestly and examining it from many sides … it is very complicated and difficult to write about truly … I would like to be able to write understandingly about both deserters and heroes, cowards and brave men, traitors and men who are not capable of being traitors. We learned a lot about all such people. (SL 480)

*For Whom the Bell Tolls* could be considered a project very close to Hemingway’s heart. Allen Joseph traces two major goals in the mind of Hemingway when he wrote *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. “On one hand he wanted to convey to the reader the larger truth of the Spanish conflict without engaging in partisan politics …” and on the other hand “Hemingway’s other goal was to write a great romantic war novel, his own version of *War and Peace*, a love story between the American volunteer Robert Jordan and the Spanish girl Maria with the real war as background” (238).

The foregoing critical survey clearly reveals that the critics have mainly focused on the writer’s narrative technique, Hemingway hero, violence of war or Spain itself but the role and significance of the women characters have not been given the attention they deserved.

Neol Volis observes “one of the most significant aspects of the war was the visual presence of women both on and off the battle field” (17). New woman of Spain was a recurring theme in the platform of sweeping social and political reform proposed by the Republican government of Spain, prior to the outset of the Spanish Civil War. The war had changed the role and face of women forever. The women moved away from the traditional roles generally assigned to them and towards a more empowered future. They participated in war. The Spanish women were no longer the docile, submissive and invisible women they used to be, now they were clamoring to
be autonomous, empowered and strong. As Catherine Coleman suggests: “The struggle for gender equality was one of the important social battles also being fought during the civil war …. political party propaganda promoted a new and positive image of the antifascist Spanish woman balancing out the predominant image of woman as victim of military action and rearguard repression” (50).

In *For Whom the Bell Tolls* Hemingway has clearly paid homage to the emancipation of women during the Spanish Civil War through his woman characters, Pilar and Maria. It would definitely provide a richer and better understanding of both of these characters, if we examine them within framework of the “New Woman.” And it will become evident that Hemingway was well aware of the emergence of the newly empowered Spanish woman. Sexual power relations were shifting in the pre and post war western world and Hemingway’s handling of the problematic issue of gender identity and sexual authority illustrates the resulting tensions. And *For Whom the Bell Tolls*’ two women are far more complex figures than the responses they have gained from the critics of earlier times. The novel has two female figures Pilar and Maria, the love interest of the protagonist.

Maria is the daughter of a village Mayor in a small town and the novel depicts a fair account of her sufferings. Her parents were shot by the fascists in front of her eyes. The fascists captured, tortured and raped Maria, subjecting her to all sorts of outrages. They raped her several times which is an act of supreme brutality and they do get her hair shaved regularly. Nineteen year old Maria does seem to exhibit the traditional behavior of the Spanish woman such as docility, subservience and abnegation. But she is depicted as brave and strong enough to retain her sanity from such a brutal past. For her docile, submissive nature critics have categorized her to the Hemingway’s typically simple norm female but that point of view is like considering only the exposed tip of Hemingway iceberg. Regaining her sanity after a traumatized rape and torture, itself is a huge example of courage and strength and more over she willingly becomes a sexual partner to Jordan.

Edmund Wilson criticizes her for her lack of independent identity when he says: “The amoeba like little Spanish girl, presented in pastoral setting as a raped
virgin, innocence within cruel experience, childlike vocabulary, somewhat boyish haircut, like, Brett, somewhat crazy from the horrors of war like Catherine” (47). Critics have dismissed her as a weak, shadow-like character, which is a rather demeaning and ignorant approach.

Both Robert and Maria fall in love as soon as they see each other. She does prove to be an ideal girl for Robert because she provides unconditional love and care to him, its her presence that helps him to forget stresses and pains of war. Moreover, her unconditional and timely emotional support facilitates the completion of his duty. For Philip Young her submissiveness and her undemanding love, puts her in the category of amoeba or leech-like girls, Young observes : “Maria is submissive and devoted beyond credibility … she exists for her lover alone and has not other interest or function in all life or the world but to serve him. And although she is for a while a very lovely vision, as we get to know she becomes more and more a vision until ultimately she ceases to be a person at all” (86).

But with a broader and unbiased perspective towards Hemingway’s female characters in *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, Gail D. Sinclair observes in his essay, *Revisiting the code: Female foundations and the Undiscovered Country in For Whom the bell Tolls*, “One does find it easy to view Maria as Hemingway’s typically submissive female if only looking at the exposed tip of the ice-berg. She willingly becomes a sexual partner to the American bridge-blower, Robert Jordan” (95). Maria’s support to Robert is productive as well as real without any personal interest or flirt-like activities.

Whereas, Linda Patterson Miller effectively argues Brett Ashley’s strengths in *The Sun Also Rises* and Sandra Whippie Spanier cogently presents Catherine Barkley as the real code-hero in *A Farewell to Arms*, the females in *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, seem to invite less critical scrutiny. But as a matter of fact the two women of *For Whom the Bell Tolls* represent endurance and real strength. Both Maria and Pilar exhibit stoic courage that might hold up to that of young male Hemingway protagonists. The women exhibit greater inner fortitude while participating in the same essentially male-dominated world waged in brutal war and rugged survival.
In order to understand both the females, the critics shall have a close look at the attributes and characteristics of them. Maria is a beautifully drawn character. The gypsy woman is delineated in such a way and with remarkable precision that she comes alive and gets sharply registered in our memory. Hemingway gives a very beautiful picture of this Spanish beauty:

…her teeth were white in her brown face and her skin and her eyes were the same golden tawny brown. She had high cheek-bones, merry eyes and a straight mouth with full lips. Her hair was the golden brown of a grain field that has been burned dark in the sun, but it was cut short all over her head so that it was but little longer than the fur on a beaver pelt …. She has a beautiful face, Robert Jordan thought she’d be beautiful if they hadn’t cropped her hair. (Hemingway, *For Whom the Bell Tolls* 24)

Maria is indeed considered as one of the most beautifully done portraits. As a woman she is conceived the way a man would traditionally wish a woman to be. She brings a sense of joy and fulfillment in Jordan’s life. Robert Jordan is instantly interested in her, as he tells her, she has “a beautiful face” (*FWTBT* 26) and asks her:

“Whose woman are you?” Robert Jordan asked, trying now to pull out of it.
“Are you Pablo’s?”
She looked at him and laughed, then slapped him on the knee.
“Of Pablo? You have seen Pablo?”
“Well, then, of Rafael. I have seen Rafael”
“Of Rafael neither.”
“Of no one,” the gypsy said. “This is a very strange woman. Is of no one. But she cooks well.”
“Really of no one?” Robert Jordan asked her.
“Of no one. No one. Neither in joke nor in seriousness. Nor of thee either.” (*FWTBT* 26-27)
When Hemingway’s eminent critics dismiss him for portraying unreal, dream-like girls, they definitely tend to overlook the small but strong mentions of their willful, strong and clear statements where they staunchly make their point clear, as in the above conversation of Robert and Maria. Maria appears to be determined to put forward her point whereas it was Jordan who felt already in awe of Maria with the thickness in his throat. “He looked at the girl, Maria, and his throat felt too thick for him to trust himself to speak.” (FWTBT 27)

Robert most of the times calls Maria “Guapa” which means lovely in Spanish. Robert Jordan is presented as mesmerized by Maria’s physical beauty. He admires her every now and then:

You have a very beautiful face. I wish I would have had the luck to see you before your hair were cut. (FWTBT 26)

Hemingway has provided his woman characters every sort of quality; they are beautiful and smart. Debra A. Moddelmog praises Maria’s physical beauty despite the war wounds that are evidently not visible: “Maria’s physical scars are either too small to notice or hidden from view. Her body and skin are smooth, she has a perfect figure and no disabling or distracting disfigurements” (129).

The young and gentle Maria catches Robert Jordan’s eye from the very first moment he meets her. She exudes a natural, glowing beauty, despite the fact that she has recently suffered a traumatic rape and has had her hair shaved off. According to some critics Hemingway intends Maria to represent the land of Spain itself, ravaged by the worrying forces beyond her comprehension, yet always enduring, beautiful and loving. As Allen Joseph puts it; “Maria, raped by the fascists, is a personification of the Spain Hemingway loved. She is innocent and pure and a part of the fragile natural world being destroyed by the mechanized doom of the war” (239).

Maria is homely and brings a sense of emotional warmth in Robert even in the war time and the hilly camp. Maria represents symbolically the value of peace time as well as an image of home. As Carlos Baker puts it: “In the lonely alien region of the
Guadarramas, she comes to stand as the image, of Home‖ (256). She is the only source of mental peace and a symbol of life-force for Jordan during the war time. Whenever Jordan thinks of her, he contemplates of the day after war:

I will marry her. Then we will be Mr. and Mrs. Robert Jordan of Sun Valley ... Spanish girls make wonderful wives ... and when I get my job back at the university she can be an instructor’s wife ... and when undergraduates .... have those so valuable informal discussions ... Maria can tell them. (FWTBT 172)

Hemingway’s female protagonists create a home away from home for their male partners, in the most adverse conditions. Similarly Maria gives a feeling of home to Jordan and willingly accepts all the roles of a wife, including taking good care of him:

“I will buy a clean wedding shirt for thee. Dost ever wash thy shirt?”
“Sometimes.”
“I will keep everything clean and I will pour they whisky and put the water in it as it was done at Sardo’s. (FWTBT 324)

Maria desires true love in which two lovers become one. Their love begins in the sleeping bag when Maria says:

…. we will be one now and there will never be a separate one … I will be thee when thou are not there (FWTBT 251).

Maria again says to herself, “There isn’t any me. I am only with him.” (FWTBT 450)

Wolfgang E.H. Rudat who initially places Maria in the camp of Hemingway “bitches”, eventually backtracks saying, he is not implying Maria is “evil or destructive.” Instead, he wants to present her as an instrument for good, because she “helps Jordan change from a sexually selfish male – chauvinist … into a considerate human being” (17).
Maria contributes towards the education of the hero. She not only provides him emotional support or physical togetherness but also contributes to his understanding of the meaning of life. After his association with Maria, Robert thinks:

How little we know of what there is to know. I wish that I were going to live a long time instead to die today because I have learned much about life in these four days … I wish there was more time. (FWTBT 396)

Apart from teaching Jordan the meaning of life, Maria inculcates in him the spirit to live. Her love represents the constructive force to Jordan. Before he meets Maria, Jordan was more of a robot than a man, an instrument for performing his duty. He remains true to his cause till the end, no doubt, but Maria’s contact makes a man of him. She revives his original self, makes him aware of the higher values and aspects of life so much so that he begins to speculate on issues of life and time. Maria makes him realize that what he actually craves for is peace of mind not heroism. Robert Jordan admits:

So far she had not affected his resolution but he would much prefer not to die. He would abandon a hero’s or martyr’s end gladly. He did not want to make a Thermopylae, nor be Horatius at any bridge, nor be the Dutch boy with his finger in that dyke. No. He would like to spend some time with Maria. That was the simplest expression of it. He would like to spend a long, long time with her. (FWTBT 171-172)

Maria is so youthful, warm-hearted, innocent and caring that she works as a fountain of inspiration for Jordan. Delbert Wylder has rightly compared Maria “to the good aspect of the Queen Goddess of the world whom the hero joins in the mystical marriage as the ultimate adventure in his quest” (78). Maria as an ideal partner gives due respect and regard to the positive qualities of her lover Jordan. She sees in him a unique behavior and feels that he is the only person who has the ability to face and eliminate the threat of fascists. Through Jordan she wants to seek revenge for
whatever has been done to her. She is ready to help and eager to make whatever small contribution she could, for the annihilation of the fascists. She tells Jordan:

I could hold the legs of the gun in the way thou told Amselmo. (*FWTB* 278)

Like Catherine Barkley of *A Farewell to Arms* Maria also, does not consider the code of marriage as an inevitable ceremony to mark the beginning and to prove the significance of a man-woman relationship. For Maria, what matters, is the emotional bond and true feelings of complete devotion and faith in the relationship.

Hemingway presents these empowered, emerging new women in such a way that they consider themselves untied to their lovers even though the union is not sanctioned by the church and they easily dispense with these types of formalities:

“Never. And I will marry thee.”

“If you wish,” she said. “But since we no longer have the church I do not think it carries importance.” (*FWTB* 351)

Marriage certainly does not seem to be the concern for Maria, but she definitely delivers and fulfills all the roles that a wife is supposed to. She calls herself Jordan’s wife and wishes to spend her life with him and even bear his children. Maria is honest and undemanding. She assures Jordan that she will be a good wife. Maria says:

I will make thee as good a wife as a I can …. I am not well trained but I will try to make up for that …. if we live in Madrid; good. If we live in any other place; good … I will study all manners … I will make mistakes but you will tell me and I will never make them twice … I will go to school to learn to be wife. (*FWTB* 362)

Maria expresses her apprehension that having known that she might not bear children Robert may not choose to marry her. He allays her fears and she assures him
that “my pride is in thee” (*FWTBT* 365). She wants to carry on this fight against fascists beyond their generations:

> I would like to bear thy son and thy daughter … and how can the world be made better if there are no children of us who fight against the fascists. (*FWTBT* 367)

Maria keeps passionately praying for the safety of her lover when he is at the job of blowing up the bridge. She prays notwithstanding the fact that she has renounced all religious affiliations:

> The Republic is one thing and we must win is another thing. But, oh, Sweet Blessed Virgin, bring him back to me from the bridge and I will do anything thou sayest ever. Because I am not here. There isn’t any me. I am only with him. Take care of him for me and that will be me and then I will do the things for thee and he will not mind. Nor will it be against the Republic. Oh please forgive me I am very confused. I am too confused now. But if thou takest care of him I will do whatever is right. I will do what he says and what you say. With the two of me I will do it. But this now not knowing I cannot endure. (*FWTBT* 468)

Maria has helped Jordan to survive and get relaxed in such a tense complicated environment. Presley has commented that Maria’s love for Jordan is therapeutic and helps him “resolve his ambivalent attitude towards war” (8). Maria is always there to take Jordan’s mind away from his inner cognition. She has increased the urge in Jordan to act out his duties against the Fascists because Maria and her family were victimized by them. On the political plane, she symbolizes the war – ravaged Spain which he loves. Robert expresses his love:

> I love thee as I love all we have fought for. I love thee as I love liberty and dignity and the rights of all men to work and not be hungry. I love thee as I
love Madrid that we have defended and as I love all my comrades that have
died. And many have died. Many. Many. Thou canst not think how many. But
I love thee as I love what I love most in the world and I love thee more. I love
thee very much, rabbit. More than I can tell thee. *(FWTBT 361)*

Along with all the womanly qualities of love, affection and care, Hemingway’s depiction of Maria exhibits confidence and stoic courage. Maria is labeled as one of Hemingway’s vapid dream girls whose self-will is dissolved in order to provide male gratification, but in case of Maria it is a misinterpretation, because, clearly, to a large extent Maria controls the encounters with Jordan rather than submitting to them. She speaks to Jordan first and even in terms of body language, she exhibits confidence. Maria exercises her position of authority by asking Robert not to stare at her short hair, an immediately visible sign of her previous trauma. She then sits directly opposite him with hands folded on her knees and through the rest of the meal smiles and watches him.

Maria looked at him and laughed, then blushed suddenly but kept on looking
at him. *(FWTBT 27)*

Her demeanor does not present an emotionally broken, or withdrawn victim but instead suggests a comfortable, familiar posture. It is Robert who is more ill at ease and more incapacitated with the swelling of his throat. Even though Maria has been severely traumatized by the atrocities she witnessed and the terror she experienced but she begins to get better physically and emotionally and over the course of the narrative she undergoes a much more stable and deeply powerful transformation in her character. Maria was brutally raped and tortured by fascists, yet the Maria we encounter is very composed and clam. Rafael gives a brief description of what had happened to her, on the very initial onset of the novel to Jordan. Rafael says:

> When we picked the girl up at the time of the train, she would not speak and she cried all the time and if any one touched her she would shiver like a wet dog. She was in a very bad state but now she is better. *(FWTBT 30)*
Maria survives that traumatic past and her stoic courage becomes evident when she says:

She said that nothing is done to oneself that one does not accept and that if I loved someone it would take it all away. *(FWTB 76)*

Maria herself decides to give away the details of her torture and rape to Jordan. She even saw her parents die in front of her eyes. She describes how the fascists killed her parents and tortured and raped her brutally. Maria recalls how her head was shaved and she was raped. She tells:

My own face I could hardly recognize because my grief had changed it but I looked at it and knew that it was me. But my grief was so great that I had no fear or any feeling of pain but my grief …. and I saw myself with one braid and a slash where the other had been. Then he cut off the other braid but without pulling on it and the razer made a small cut on my ear and I saw blood come from it …. *(FWTB 365)*

Maria even gives a brief description of her rape. She says:

“I wanted to,” she said. “But I know not how. Where things were done to me I fought until I could see. I fought until-until-until one sat upon my head- and I bit him-and then they tied my mouth and held my arms behind my head – and others did things to me” *(FWTB 74)*.

To regain her sanity and behave as normal as possible, is a matter of great courage, after what all she has faced. Maria makes a conscious decision, encouraged by Pilar’s advice, to involve herself in sexual relationship. She does initiate the action by going to Robert’s sleeping bag on the first night. She hesitates before getting in but ultimately makes the decision and says:
And now let us do quickly what it is we do so that the other is all gone. (FWTBT 71)

Maria becomes progressively more assertive as the story unfolds. Her sense of agency begins with a desire to avenge the death of her parents. She even asks Jordan to teach her to shoot and confides in him that the Fascists who killed her family and assaulted her: “are bad people and I would like to kill some of them with thee if I could.” (FWTBT 380)

Jordan finds Maria to be a true companion, a suitable partner, one in whom all feminine roles are merged:

Maria is my true love and my wife. I never had a true love. I never had a wife. She is also my sister and I never had a sister and my daughter and I never will have a daughter. I hate to leave a thing that is so good. (FWTBT 358)

Jordan’s love for Maria is of true nature. If Maria is shown to be a woman who thinks of her own identity and existence only with Jordan, in return Jordan also shows true love for her. In the very initial encounter of their union Jordan feels the true love for Maria and admits:

… he was happier that he had ever been, lightly, lovingly, exultingly, innerly happy and unthinking and untired and unworried and only feeling a great delight…. (FWTBT 75)

Hemingway shows that both men and women are part of a complete whole and one is incomplete without the other. Maria embodies all the qualities, Hemingway considers virtues – she has a great capacity for love, she is gentle and soft spoken. She is undemanding and even though she has been traumatized, she still maintains a stable demeanor, with the help of Pilar, in this war – wearied world. Maria is the kind of woman who knows how and when to be submissive and brings a sense of wholeness in Jordan’s life:
Thou wilt go now, rabbit. But I go with thee. As long as there is one of us there is both of us .... if thou goes then I go, too. Do you not see how it is? Whichever one there is, is both. Thou wilt go now for us both .... I am thee now. (FWTB 481)

Within a short period of three days, Maria has given Jordan as much life as possible. Maria stands for the normal, here in the midst of terrible abnormality. She is a symbol of the soil that Jordan is fighting for. If Pilar is the mountain than she is the young tree that grows on the hill side which will survive the storm when it has blown over. When Jordan’s dialects get confused, Maria brings order to his thinking and makes it more concrete. In the hour of death, Jordan is a devoted husband safeguarding the retreat of his wife. She brings him back to the earth and thus reminds him that behind all controversies and even beyond them, there are men for whose future he is fighting. Maria symbolizes the vast humanity for which Jordan lays down his life so that they may enjoy a good, dignified life. Maria complements Jordan’s male nature, her qualities unite with his and there the idyllic love – affair blossoms.

The novel’s best known line—“And then the earth moved” (FWBT, 395) is Hemingway’s attempt to convey the significance and the rarity of true organic union between them.

Pilar is arguably the most colorful and likable character in For Whom the Bell Tolls, as she represents the earthiness, strength and wisdom of the Spanish culture of that era. Hemingway’s detailed description on beauty leaves a picturesque image in reader’s mind, yet self-claimed ugly Pilar, who says, “I was born ugly. All my life I have been ugly” (FWTBT 102) gets sharply carved in the reader’s mind, with her large, robust, gypsy features and behavior. Pilar is a curious combination of a firm and tender personality. She has her own ideas. She is absolutely clear in her intentions and does not vacillate. Pilar exercises great influence over the band of guerrillas. Pilar’s role in the course of the novel is very significant because she provides the motivating force behind many of the novel’s events. She gives encouragement and moral support to Maria. In fact Maria has been rescued by Pilar. She teaches Jordan
how to live and work for the fulfillment of life. She initiates Robert and Maria’s romance which eventually helps in healing Maria’s psychic wounds. She acts as the support structure for the camp, unites them as a family, cooks for all and takes care of each of them in her own rugged and brash way. Yet critics tend to neglect her importance. David Cope brings this issue to light and says:

In *Cassandra’s Daughter’s* – Roger Whitlow discusses a variety of female types prominent in Hemingway’s work yet Pilar, the bold female leader who has taken control of Pablo’s band of partisans in *For Whom the bell Tolls* — a woman as complex as any of Hemingway’s male heroes and far more interesting as a strong woman than any other character in his work — is given merely a few sentences which only notes the masculine quality critics have seen in her and the fact that she serves a ‘therapeutic’ function for Maria. (Web)

But through the character of Pilar, Hemingway presents the vivid nature of a woman. Pilar, is a mysterious character. In the course of the novel, she works as a savior, mother, leader, historian, narrator, fortune teller and a calm and composed person during the most difficult situations. In a way Pilar is solely responsible for Maria’s survival and her present normal condition. Pilar’s determination to endure extends beyond her limits, especially to save Maria, whom she literary rescues from death. Rafael tells Jordan how Maria was rescued by Pilar:

We would have left her after the train. Certainly it was not worth being delayed by something so sad and ugly and apparently worthless. But the old woman tied a rope to her and when the girl thought she could not go further, the old woman beat her with the end of the rope to make her go. Then when she could not really go further, the old woman carried her over her shoulder. When the old woman could not carry her, I carried her. We were going up that hill breast high in the gorse and heather. And when I could no longer carry
her, Pablo carried her. But what the old woman had to say to us to make us do it! (*FWTBT* 28)

Her love for Maria is genuine. Firstly she saves her from the grim circumstances and then she guards her like her own child. She found the girl in bad shape as Rafael explains:

> She would not speak and she cried all the time and if anyone touched her, she would shiver like a wet dog. (*FWTBT* 30)

And it is only because of Pilar’s efforts that Maria has recovered a lot. That is why she instructs Jordan, at the very first moment she meets him, saying:

> “Be very good and careful about the girl” (*FWTBT* 33).

Pilar teaches Maria a number of household jobs. Also it is Pilar who advises Maria to keep a razor blade and explains its use in time of emergency. Earl Rovit calls her “a fairy godmother bestower of all blessings” (59). Not only in rescuing Maria, but also in helping her regain her sanity Pilar plays a very significant role. Like a selfless benevolent mother, she takes care of Maria as well as protects her and prepares her for an upcoming beautiful future. She always praises her beauty:

> “You like anything,” Pliar said. “You are a gift to any man if you could cook a little better. (*FWTBT* 102)

Pilar even protects her from Pablo and the other band members as well:

Pablo has a sickness for her already. It is another thing which destroys him. It lies on him like a sickness when he sees her. It is best that she goes now. (*FWTBT* 35)

Agustín also informs Robert about Pilar’s protective nature towards Maria. He says:
“There is a rare thing.” Agustin said. “Since she came to us at the train the Pilar has kept her away from all as fiercely as though she were in a convent of Carmelites. You cannot imagine with what fierceness she guarded her. You come and she gives her to thee as a present. How does that seem to thee? (FWTBT 300)

Pilar nurtures Maria to the point where she, herself finds that she is capable of loving a man. And it is only when Maria displays attraction towards Jordan that Pilar instructs her and Jordan about how to proceed in a meaningful relationship, so that Maria will not be hurt again. Pilar provides a rich source of love and care, not only to Maria but also to Jordan. She is a sensitive and emotional human being. Pilar becomes a source of inspiration for him and inspires him to lay down his life for others. Since the moment Jordan comes to the hills, she has supported him. It is inconceivable what Jordan could do without her. Pilar helps in initiating the love relationship, because she knows its restorative values for Maria. Jordan Robert admires her :

It hit you then and you know it and so why lie about it you went all strange every time you looked at her and every time she looked at you. So why don’t you admit it. All right, I’ll admit it. And as for Pilar pushing her onto you. All Pilar did was be an intelligent woman she had taken good care of the girl and she saw what was coming the minute the girl come back into the cave with the cooking dish.
So she made things easier. She made things easier so that there was last night and this afternoon. She is a damned sight more civilized than you are and she knows what time is all about (FWTBT 180).

Robert understands Pilar’s beneficial role in his own development and says to himself :

When you get through with the war you might take up the study of women, he said to himself. You could start with Pilar. (FWTBT 191)
Pilar was the first person in the course of the novel to foresee and recognize the upcoming love affair of Maria and Jordan, she helps Maria in realizing the relationship and she even helps Jordan in realizing the depth of his relationship with Maria. She searchingly asks Jordan:

“And Women?”
“I like them very much, but I have not given them much importance.”
“You do not care for them?”
“Yes. But I have not found one that moved me as they say they should move you.”
“I think you lie.”
“May be a little.”
“But you care for Maria.”
“Yes. Suddenly and very much.” (FWTBT 96)

Pilar prepares Maria for their first sexual encounter and sends her to Jordan’s sleeping bag and even after that Pilar provides every possible, available opportunity for the lovers to be alone and get intimate. Pilar leaves the couple alone in the mountain Heather:

“Wait,” Robert Jordan called to her. “It is better that we should all go together.”
Maria sat there and said nothing.
Pilar did not turn.
“Que Va, go together,” she said. “I will see thee at the camp.”
Robert Jordan stood there.
“Is she all right?” he asked Maria. “she looked ill before.”
“Let her go,” Maria said, her head still down.
“I think I should go with her.”
“Let her go,” said Maria. “Let her go!” (FWTBT 157)
This whole incident shows Pilar’s self-less desire to help the lovers get some time alone and also Maria’s willingness to enter a meaningful relationship. Hemingway’s multi-faceted Pilar, though practical, is endowed with a mysterious, mystical and intuitive characteristic of palm-reading. She knows by her power of fortune – telling, that Jordan has little time to live. But she never mentions the fact to Jordan so that it may not let his morale down:

Let me see thy hand,” the woman said. Robert Jordan put his hand out and the woman opened it, held it in her own big hand, rubbed her thumb over it and looked at it, carefully, then dropped it. She stood up. He got up too and she looked at him without smiling.

“What did you see in it?” Robert Jordan asked her. “I don’t believe in it. You won’t scare me.”


Jordan appreciates this aspect of her character and affirms that “Pilar was the psychiatrist” (*FWTBT* 147). Pilar is an incarnation of the archetypal woman in her most fearsome guise. She has the ability to detect “the odor of death” (*FWTBT* 265) on a doomed man. When asked to describe this odor, she says that one part of it is the smell that arises on a ship in the midst of a storm at sea, when one feels “faint and hollow in stomach” (*FWTBT* 263). Pilar helps in Maria’s survival which could be clearly interpreted as her re-birth. Thus identified with the cycles of birth and death, Pilar is an example of Great Mother, both nurturing and saving. Jordan respects Pilar for her solidity and endurance. Her experiences make her a superb teacher, mentor and leader to the guerrilla band. She epitomizes the strong woman whose superiority could even threaten the men around her. Mark Spilka also praises Pilar in his book *Hemingway’s quarrel with Androgyny*. Spilka says, “in many ways Pilar is the great puzzle of *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, Hemingway had created her with an oddly more generous sense of female wisdom and strength than he had shown in previous fiction or would ever show again” (98). Though Spilka praises the depiction of Pilar in
Hemingway’s fiction, but he tends to somehow connect Pilar with Hemingway’s literary mother Gertrude Stein or Hemingway’s own mother Grace Hall Hemingway. Therefore bringing the autobiographical aspect in the fore-ground leads to erroneous interpretations.

Pilar has all the qualities of a great leader. Right from the beginning it becomes evident that Pablo is band’s leader just for name. As Pilar says: “Here I command. No one commands but me. Here I command” (FWTBT 59). Robert also acknowledges Pilar’s leadership qualities early on and thus he says:

“With out the woman, there is no organization nor discipline here and with the woman it can be very good.” (FWTBT 68)

She decides to help Jordan for the cause of the Republic, she categorically states:

“I am for the bridge and against thee [Pablo]” (FWTBT 55).

The other members of the band, too, decide to be led by her. She even helps in negotiating the meeting between Jordan and El Sordo. Also when Pablo deserts the band with explosive material, she prepares herself to perform the duty that Pablo should have done. She, in a sense, encourages Jordan, saying:

I will go to the lower post and do that which was the duty of Pablo. In this way, we are one more. (FWTBT 414)

The members of the band greatly respect her and everyone ready to work according to her commands. For that, they are even ready to denounce Pablo. As a leader, Pilar showcases understanding of strategic matters and easily grasps the implications of Jordan’s and El Sordo’s plans. Pilar is wise enough to know where she and others can contribute as followers. Her domination is an attempt to discipline the members of the band. At the same time, her negation of her husband as an authority, is not merely for the sake of rebellion, she never ignores his previous goodness. Pilar
is also quick to forgive and very helpful. Her helping nature comes to the fore in her expression:

“For what are we born if not to aid one another?” (FWTB 145)

These generous aspects of her character deflate the image of a dominating, overbearing, whimsical Pilar. Though Pilar has received widely divergent responses her humane aspect has always found favor with the critics. Jordan appreciates help rendered to him and Maria by Pilar:

She is like a mountain and the boy and the girl are like young trees. (FWTB 146)

As David Cope asserts: “In that crucial interplay of realities, the central figure is Pilar herself, one who withholds or gives, closes or opens possibilities as her own scrupulously careful spirit dictates to her: Pilar is a character whose presence is pivotal in this, the greatest and most symphonic of Hemingway’s novels: though neither its major heroine nor main character in a very real sense she is the rock upon which Hemingway built For Whom the Bell Tolls” (Web).

Pilar’s most attractive quality for Jordan is her superb story telling ability. After listening from her the story of massacre at the Ayuntamiento, he thinks. “if that woman could only write. He would try to write and if had luck and could remember it perhaps he could get it down as she told it. God, how she could tell a story. She’s better than Quevedo” (FWTB 141).

Pilar knows how to play with words. Her story telling is not only full of essence but also full of heart warming details of the scenes, gestures, speech and emotions of the people who were being dragged to death. The violence becomes a moving picture in reader’s mind when Pilar narrates:

I saw the hall full of men flailing away with clubs and striking with flails and poking and striking and pushing and heaving against people with the white
wooden pitchforks that now were red and with their times broken and this was
going on all over the room while Pablo sat in the big chair with his shotgun on
his knees, watching, and they were shouting and clubbing and stabbing and
men were screaming as horses scream in a fire. (FWTBT 125)

Amid all of this, Pilar never flinches from telling the truth carefully and in
great detail. She wants to make Jordan understand what has happened to her land and
her people. She is capable of making portraits out of her words:

I could see the square in the moonlight where the lines had been and across the
square the trees shining in the moonlight, and the darkness of their shadows,
and the benches bright too in the moonlight, and the scattered bodies shining
and beyond the edge of the cliff where they had all been thrown …. I went out
on the balcony standing there in my bare feet on the iron and the moon shone
on the faces of all the buildings of the square and the crying was coming from
the balcony of the house of Don Guillermo. It was his wife and she was on the
balcony kneeling and crying. (FWTBT 129)

Pilar narrates the crudities and horrors of war in her story. With equal great
ease and beauty she narrates her love-making to both Maria and Jordon. Pilar tells
them:

We made love in the room with the strip wood blinds hanging over the
balcony and a breeze through the opening of the top of the door which turned
on hinges. We made love there, the room dark in the day time from the
hanging blinds and from the streets there was the scent of the flower market
and the smell of burned powder from the fire crackers of the traca that run
through the streets exploding each non during the Feria. (FWTBT 90).

Through the character of Pilar, Hemingway presents the vivid and versatile
nature of a woman. First she saves Maria, helps her in getting true love and then
becomes envious of the passion between Jordan and Maria. She chides Jordan for
calling Maria rabbit and in a way seems to resent too. But soon she realizes and apologizes to Maria for being rude. She acknowledges:

I don’t know what has held me today. I have an evil temper (FWTBT 161).

Pilar exhibits great inner fortitude while participating in the same essentially male-dominated world caught in the vortex of brutal war and rugged survival. And we find even Jordan admitting and admiring the courage of Pilar in the final stages of the novel. During Jordan’s last hours to fortify himself with courage under fire he reminds himself: “I’ll bet, that goddamn woman up above isn’t shaking. That Pilar” (FWTBT 437).

Jordan clearly owes much of his courage to Pilar. Pilar’s role as a leader is very significant and pivotal in the progress of novel. She emerges as a binding agent and a commanding source essentially needed for the cohesion of a group in the time of war. Gail D. Sinclair asserts that Pilar stands in the different middle ground occupied by very few Hemingway women. He further says: “Pilar possesses an ultimately complementary character, at once thoroughly gentle and maternal and contrastingly dominant and powerful though not necessarily threatening to the men with whom she associates” (99). Sinclair further asserts in his essay that “To view the women of For Whom the Bell Tolls in a more powerful and important role, even to read them as code heroes, of a sort, does not reduce Hemingway’s males but broadens our understanding of the writer’s more complex vision and its ability to reach beyond the formulaic, restrictive code. It only enhances Hemingway’s significance as one of this century’s preeminent artists” (108).

According to Carlos Baker, Hemingway told his editor Mex Perkins, during the writing of the novel: “So far, said he [Hemingway], there are two wonderful women in the book” (343, 628) Hemingway created not one but two embodiment of the New Spanish Women in For Whom the Bell Tolls. Hemingway honors the courage and sacrifices of the women who participated, fought, coped with the loss and demonstrated strength and bravery during the Spanish Civil War. Though Pilar and
Maria, Hemingway presents ‘two fine women’ who represent the qualities of the ‘New Woman of Spain.’ Maria and Pilar, are not subsidiary characters in *For Whom the Bell Tolls*; rather they are the ones who support and empower the story.
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