CHAPTER III
FOR WHOM THE BELL TOLLS - AN EXPRESSION OF FAITH

With the publication of For Whom the Bell Tolls in 1939, it was evident that Hemingway had come a long way since the writing of A Farewell to Arms. He had changed his tone drastically. From the easy youthful posture of revolt, disillusionment and ultimate isolation of the earlier novel, he had to envisage a vision of man, where there was no room for a "separate peace"; what mattered now was the brotherhood of man working together for a common cause, greater than just the survival of the self.

This transitional process was not a painless one, for Hemingway passed to For Whom the Bell Tolls through the ante room of his worst novel To Have and Not. This novel is of minor significance but it is important in Hemingway's development as an artist. At the end of the novel, Harry Morgan, the protagonist of the novel realises that his aggressive individualism has failed him, but the pattern of his tragic isolation and death has been set and his recognition for the need for human solidarity comes too late. With the words Harry Morgan speaks: "No matter how, a man alone ain't got no bloody chance".

Hemingway introduces a conflict that is to become increasingly acute in the mind of his next protagonist. Apparently, Hemingway had begun at this time to become aware of the tragic effects of the forces of rebellion, individualism and isolation that he had just extolled in the lives of the matadors (Death in the Afternoon). In any case one theory that has been advanced in the final words of Harry Morgan is the renunciation in the author's part of a rebellious, antisocial and belligerently individualistic attitude and the acceptance of a new social framework. Edgar Johnson in his *Farewell to a Separate Peace* feels Hemingway means to show that Harry Morgan has been beaten because he "has tried to stand alone and fight alone" and that this provides the clue to victory for his heroes to come. "Hemingway has rejected a philosophy of atomic individualism" he says, "he has fought his way out of defeatism, ... For the good, the gentle and the brave", he now tells us, if they do not try to stand alone and make a separate peace, defeat is not inevitable.

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3. Ibid., Page 125.
It is within this pattern of Hemingway's renunciation, exile and return that his later and more popular novel *For Whom the Bell Tolls* must be appraised.

More than any other single event it seems to have been the civil war in Spain that returned Hemingway to the world of other people. The Spanish Civil War had a strong emotional impact on him. His emotional investment in the country, great because many of his friends from the bullfight days were on the wrong side; most of the matadors supported the Francoist insurgents and the Soviets supporting the Republic were more acceptable politically and intellectually than emotionally.

The Spanish Civil War was the mirror image of the sort of war in which the United States usually involved itself in the twentieth century: individuals volunteered to serve while the country remained officially neutral. Since 1917 the tendency had been for the nation to get involved while individuals try to opt out. Allen Guttman has suggested that although the Spanish Civil War disturbed the part of the American public that was politically alert as no other event except the Great Depression itself, it also had a curiously satisfying quality.
It was a war in which the natural man in the tradition of Thoreau and Whitman clearly opposed the forces of a mechanised society.\textsuperscript{4} El Sordo defending his hilltop against the aeroplanes and Jordan blowing up the bridge to stop the tanks represents in a way, the desires of a society anxious about the increasing regimentation of their lives.

By the time of the Spanish Civil War, it had become clear to Hemingway that death was the true measure of human qualities and that while death is still very badly organised in war, it is in war, beyond human tampering. As he said in \textit{Death in the Afternoon}, he had used bullfighting as an emotional equivalent of war during the twenties and early thirties. But at the end of the book had found that matadors could posture before the crowds in the presence of death in the arena, or because of the decadence in bullfight practices, one could never tell whether he was in the presence of death or only of a tampered with bull.

The corrupt bullfight managers might find their moral equivalent in the politicians but the politicians' mismanagement did not intrude in the testing of man at the front. So he went to the battle-fronts of his time and reported how men really are.

In *For Whom the Bell Tolls* there are no longer any literal bullfighters but Hemingway is as much occupied with the bullfighters' values as ever, and the conflict in his hero's mind between the forces of aggression and restraint, individualism and inter-dependance increases in severity. The author states that in this book he is putting in all that he learnt about the Spaniards' characters and values. And Robert Jordan emphasises that the Spanish Civil War was his education: "It is part of one's education", he said, "it will be quite an education when it's finished. You learn in this war if you listen. You most certainly did."


"No Man is an Island intire of itself..." These words from a devotion of John Donne, are a part of an epigraph to For Whom the Bell Tolls, a title which comes from the same source. In images derived from geography and from funeral customs of seventeenth century London, Donne had set down a little parable about the inter-dependency of all human beings. Hemingway saw that the passage pointed to the theme of tragic loss of human solidarity which he had been developing in the story of Robert Jordan. It concludes with the statement that "any man's death diminishes me because I am involved in Man-kind and therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee."

This time the novel is true to its controlling concept. It deals with three days in the life of the Hemingway hero, Robert Jordan, who is fighting as an American volunteer in the Spanish Civil War. He is sent to join a guerilla band in the mountains near Segovia to blow up a strategic bridge, thus facilitating a loyalist advance. He spends three days in the guerilla cave, while he awaits what he expects to be his own destruction and he falls in love with Maria, the daughter of a Republican Mayor who has been murdered - as she herself has been raped - by the Falangists.
Jordan believes the attack will fail, but the generals refuse to cancel it until it is too late. He successfully destroys the bridge, is wounded in the retreat and is left to die. But he has come to see the wisdom of such a sacrifice, and the book ends without bitterness.

The most striking thing about Robert Jordan, however, is the distance he has come from Frederick Henry of A Farewell to Arms. Robert Jordan is made to say to himself "He fought now in this war because it had started in a country that he loved and he believed in the Republic .... He was under Communist discipline for the duration of the war .... because in the conduct of the war, they were the only party whose programme and discipline he could accept." This is in fact a rejection not only of Marxism but of defeatism as well, and the conflict between personal love and political duty of A Farewell to Arms is now finally resolved. Communism is merely an instrument for the winning of the war. More important is the suggestion of some greater affirmative value.

7. Ibid., Page 149.
He opts to fight in this war because it had started in a country he loved and he believed in the Republic. This is clearly illustrative of the changes that took place in the ten year interval in Hemingway's thinking. Frederick Henry had declared in *A Farewell to Arms* in the much quoted words: "I was always embarrassed by the words sacred, glorious and sacrifice". And then there is Jordan in *For Whom the Bell Tolls* saying "You believed in Liberty, Equality and Fraternity,..., If this war is lost all of those things are lost." The shift from the negative to the affirmative demands a shift in the resultant action. Thus, while Henry opts to desert, Jordan does his duty and pursues a mission knowing it is doomed from the start. He continues, despite the possibilities of his own death, despite the confusion in command not very far removed from the disorganised retreat at Caporetto which ultimately prompted Frederick Henry to desert. He continues despite a love affair in every way as strong as that between Henry and Catherine.

8. Ibid., Page 305.
Liberty, Equality and Fraternity do not comprise an empty slogan for Jordan, but words that represent reality. They are real to him because he has faith in their possibility. The only driving force behind the success or failure of Jordan's mission is that of faith. It is faith which battles against odds and emerges triumphant. This is the end of disillusionment. This is the end of the "lost generation".

But it is not an unquestioning faith, a product of the naivete of the hero. For Whom the Bell Tolls is a novel of faith and the struggle to maintain it. Throughout the novel we are made persistently aware that Jordan's faith has not been cheaply bought. Hemingway has the difficult problem of presenting the struggle as both authentic and immediate. He manages to make this struggle real to the reader through the technique of internal dialogue that Jordan carries on with his own conscience. The main thrust of the novel is not the heroism that Jordan displays, but how he manages to achieve what he does.

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9. A remark attributed to Miss Gertrude Stein.
In one sense *For Whom the Bell Tolls* reads like a morality play with the forces of aggression and restraint battling for Jordan's soul. All the members of Pablo's band display the extremist tendencies inherent in the Spaniard's nature. With the bloodthirsty Pablo at one pole and the soft-hearted Anselmo at the other, Consequently Jordan is torn between two marring impulses - the impulse to love human beings and to allow himself to become involved with them as in his good companionship with Anselmo and his love for Maria and the impulse to engage in the rebellious individualism of the matador, such as is evinced by the fanatical Augustine and the irresponsible anarchist Pablo. Jordan exhibits a spiritual relationship with both of these extremes, by turns he is both gentle and cruel, tender and barren of feeling. He looks with regret upon the frequent reversion to beastiality in the people around him and reflects sadly on much that is irrationally aggressive within himself. And in particular, he observes that the Spaniards' wilful resistance of authority and domination is the chief disintegrating factor in the struggle for a better life. A part of Robert Jordan - perhaps the greater part it would seem veered towards Anselmo.
Anselmo represents a position towards which a part of Hemingway was drawn, as the priest in *A Farewell to Arms* had served as a similar attraction for Fredrick Henry.

Maxwell Geismar writes about the tragic paradox confronting Jordan. "As the story progresses...... the 'Yes' of Jordan is progressively threatened by the submerged 'nada' of his creator and the pervasive nada of his comrades." 10 Jordan's emotional faith in the Spanish people is first shaken when he hears Pilar's account of the murder of the Fascists in the village square at the hands of Pablo's mob. Even though Pilar seems to detect the furious mixture of humanity and beastiality among the killers, she recounts the spectacle with a cold fascination, as if it had been a bullfight and in fact the barbaric spectacle perpetrated by Pablo's mob brings forth the same primitive passions - the same zest for killing - as is inspired by the primitive ceremony of killing epitomised in the bullring.

Jordan seems to recognise the tragic implications of the killings - that the primitive emotions unleashed by the war could not be assuaged by the seeking of justice. It is a moment for the explosion of the irrational element in man. Having made the first killing, Pablo's band grow impatient for the next victim, the next bull.

But it is striking how rarely Hemingway disparages the enemy! In Hemingway's ethics there are no villains in war, except those made possible by the war itself. For Hemingway the enemy too was a man functioning at his highest powers in the presence of death. Atrocity on one side is balanced by atrocity on the other, as Pablo's massacre of the Fascists, is balanced by Maria's rape by the Falangists and the very vicious aspects of Fascism are inherent in the Republican side as well.

One of the major moral conflicts in the novel is that between the duty to kill under the circumstances of war and the principle which values human life.
Robert Jordan and Anselmo, the sweet man of peace amidst war's horrors try to assuage the stirrings of their conscience. Repeatedly Anselmo searches his conscience about the right to kill. He believes killing to be a sin but it is a necessary evil in the cause of the war. And so even though he wishes "to win the war and shoot nobody", he does his duty for the cause of the Republic. Yet it is Anselmo who insists on Jordan being explicit in his orders to shoot the guard at the bridge. The conflict is resolved in his mind through the belief that the responsibility for an act lies in the one ordering it rather than on the one performing it.

Jordan too is deeply anguished about killing. He never kills with pleasure but always with pain. He mourns for the enemy as well as for the friend. Killing can only be justified if it is a necessity and carried out for the greater good. If one believes in killing the whole thing is wrong. A voice within Jordan urges him on a straight path of honesty and insists that only if these transgressions are faced can Jordan survive with a clear faith.
In being honest to himself Jordan recognises the necessity to kill that was on Augustine like "a mare on heat" and remarks that there is no stronger thing in life. Thinking this over Jordan calls it the Spanish "extra sacrament" that has welled forth in wars and Inquisitions and he admits that he too and all those who are soldiers by choice have felt it at some time or the other whether they lie about it or not.\footnote{Hemingway, Ernest - \textit{For Whom the Bell Tolls} (Triad/ Panther, 1976) Page 254-255.} To this end Malcolm Cowley has observed "Hemingway himself seems to have a feeling for half forgotten sacraments" such as the Spaniards' instinct for killing, "His cast of mind is pre-Christian and pre-logical", says Cowley.\footnote{Cowley, Malcolm- \textit{Nightmare and Ritual - A Collection of Critical Essays} in \textit{Portable Hemingway} (New York, 1944) Page 49.} This primitive emotion is precisely what Jake Barnes enjoyed in connection with death giving in \textit{The Sun Also Rises} and and Hemingway explained more clearly in \textit{Death in the Afternoon} - the pagan elation of one still in rebellion against death.
But the most exacting experience for Robert Jordan is not in the killing but in the preparing to be killed. His heroic posture of courage and dignity seems to have a deep-rooted history. Somewhere in the back of Jordan's mind is the guilt of his father's suicide which forces him to adopt a certain stance; to blot out the stain of his father's cowardice as if he had never been, and to replace him with his grandfather, the soldier in the family.

Cruelty and violence and the compulsion to kill assume, however, a larger dimension in the fight for universal justice. "Neither you nor this old man is anything, you are instruments to do your duty... there is a bridge and that bridge can be the point on which the future of the human race may turn." 13

From the very beginning it becomes clear that the general course of the war is dependent on smaller events and the great battle of Segovio is dependent on internal battles fought in the minds of the participants.

Concentric circles are formed around the large offensive at the top, the success of which depends upon the proper functioning of the smaller units, resting ultimately on that particular guerilla band led by Robert Jordan whose job it is to blow up the bridge. And ultimately it is upon Jordan's clear thinking and soundness of spirit that the success of his operation is based.

The importance of the individual is heightened and becomes further significant in the context of Donne's epigraph - "No man is an Island intire of itself,....". Reality is not a whole, as perceived by the narrator, but formed by a number of individual parts, an investigation of human interdependence which Hemingway sought in the novel.

This theme is particularly relevant to the narrative technique that Hemingway employs in this perhaps his greatest novel. No doubt it would be too easy to say that the theme of "No Man is an Islande" could not have been aptly illustrated by first person narrative.

Nevertheless, if the appropriateness of the first person narrative in novels such as The Sun Also Rises and A Farewell to Arms is applauded, one cannot but subscribe
to the idea that such a technique would have been a handicap in *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. The effect of alienation and isolation which it is possible to convey so admirably with that technique is not what is wanted to express the essential brotherhood of man. On the contrary, the third person narrative technique which Hemingway uses for this particular novel is very apt for the theme of human inter-dependence. In this novel the narrator is free to move from one character to another to give us a view of their thoughts. Thus, in being equally accessible to the omniscient narrator—all existing on one plane and apart from him, they may be regarded technically and thematically as each "a piece of the continent, a part of the Maine".

War seems to be a strange setting for the demonstration of such ethics. But Hemingway felt that men are at their finest, the closer they are to battle and in the testing of their resources against death, Hemingway showed his leaning towards primitivism. In this case death's agent was other men rather than nature. The war in Spain illustrated another part of Hemingway's assumption that it was in war that men lived most fully.
To live next to death, they had to learn to live nimbly, to accept the discipline of a situation and adapt themselves mentally, physically and emotionally to a new situation. "Learning to suspend one's imagination and living completely in the very second of the present minute with no before or after is the greatest gift a soldier can have." 14 El Sordo defending his hilltop hideout against the fascist army is a prime illustration of this. Caught up in the pressures of violence and death men can still function with faith, principle and honour, in spite of the internal emotional weaknesses, the temptations and self-deceptions.

Jordan's heroic stature is heightened through his ability to transcend these many different conflicts that tug at his emotions. Given the best of chances, Jordan's mission to blow up the bridge is doomed to failure. Yet we are made conscious of Jordan's faith as the deciding factor between success and failure.

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In the beginning Jordan had felt as though he was taking part in a Crusade, but gradually he sees through the veneer of idealism to the hypocrisy of the Republican party. He perceives the strengths and weaknesses of both the Fascists and the Loyalists. Not wanting to go through life wearing rose tinted spectacles Jordan is a man who likes to know how things are and not how they are supposed to be. The Fascists were fighting for a cause just as were the Republicans - the only difference was in the cause. Like the true bullfighter performing to the hilt he promises to give absolute loyalty during the period of the war, but no one owned his mind nor his powers of seeing and hearing.

From the very beginning he refuses to trust Pablo, while he readily trusts Anselmo, Pilar and certain others. Three days is too short a time for any of the band to give proof of their trust; it is just that he is mentally strong enough to take the risk, a stability that can only arise from an inherent strong faith in humanity.
The overall picture of the Spanish Civil War that Hemingway presents is not a very inspiring one. Every level is infested with moral cripples. And at the very highest rung of the ladder there are people like General Lister, not unlike the Carabiniere at the bridge in A Farewell to Arms. There is intrigue and hypocrisy at every level—in other words the landscape is very similar to the Italian front in A Farewell to Arms. The only difference is that while Hemingway's earlier protagonists dread commitment, Jordan inspite of the conditions finds the cause worthwhile. Jordan does not alienate himself because he finds the conditions imperfect, but its very imperfections strengthens his will to contribute what little he can. It is Jordan's faith grounded in his own set of principles that sets him apart from people like Frederick Henry, who seems a callow youth in comparison. Frederick Henry and Jordan are both assailed by doubts and moments of abject cynicism but what separates the grain from the chaff is that while Jordan's faith is strong enough to withstand his doubts, Henry's lead to ultimate disillusionment and despair.
Jordan is like the good bullfighter of *A Sun Also Rises* --- a true professional and a true hero. His bridge is at the centre of the history of holding actions; and although his mission is small in scale it is so conceived and projected as to suggest an epic struggle. "Jordan remains an essential non-conformist, a free man not taken in, though doing his part in the perennial attempts which free men must make if the concept of freedom is to last." ¹⁵

The mood of *For Whom the Bell Tolls* is that the war is accepted as an immediate necessity, but one which may be possibly avoided in the future, not by imposing the will of the victor upon the vanquished but by appealing to the humanity of both the parties. Frederick Henry's concept of war had been limited to the possibility of a solution imposed by military force, Jordan's is ultimately pacifist.

As one of Hemingway's wise old peasants says to another "We must teach them. We must take away their planes; their automatic weapons, their artillery and teach them dignity." 16

At the end of the novel, Jordan lies wounded waiting for his death. It seems as if the hero has come full circle from the predicament of Frederick Henry - he is once more threatened by the forces which kill the very good, the very brave and the very gentle impartially. One is reminded of El Sordo on his hilltop surrounded by death on all sides: "If one must die", he thought, and clearly one must, I can die. But I hate it." 17 Just as Jordan's ideals become more genuine because of his insistence on viewing them realistically, so also his death becomes more meaningful because of his wish to live.


17. Ibid. Page 275.
Jordan realises that death is around the corner, yet by giving himself to the rigid set of rules for war and for the attainment of manhood he can still impart some form and dignity to his life. Jordan plays out his lone hand like all those matadors Hemingway admired in the past. He dies in keeping with the Spanish belief that there is a correct way to live and a correct way to die. He is left at the close of the novel working alone, keeping himself in check before the bull, showing himself superior to circumstances, before the final thrusting of the sword, Jordan anticipates Santiago of The Old Man and the Sea who fights against indomitable circumstances and yet remains unvanquished. The individual and the human spirit emerge victorious against all odds. And in a final gesture of defiance and affirmation, watching the enemy come into his rifle sights, Jordan's heart pounds wildly and he asserts --
"I've held it. I held it all right".18 Because he wins the game, is stern with himself to the end, he is able to achieve what he does and "makes faith seem possible even in our time".19