



Research Article

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From Communion to Conflict: Sacred Duty and Secular Struggle in Hemingway's War Epics

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Abstract

Ernest Hemingway's For Whom the Bell Tolls delves deeply into the themes of time, mortality, and the human condition, concentrating on the agonising seventy hours that precede the protagonist Robert Jordan's final act. The work explores universal themes like love, loyalty, and the unavoidable meeting with fate, moving beyond the immediate context of the Spanish Civil War. Hemingway deftly mixes chronological projections, flashbacks, and a foreboding sense of impending doom to portray the complex moral structure of his characters. This results in a rich picture where bravery coexists with cowardice and compassion with violence. The novel's language duality—a blend of Spanish and English—enhances the story and lends it an epic, vivid tone that is evocative of Elizabethan theatre. The analysis situates For Whom the Bell Tolls within the canon of classical tragedy, highlighting the characters' valiant resistance to fate as well as the precise unity of time and space. Hemingway creates a story that is both a profound meditation on personal sacrifice and a broader articulation of human unity in the face of group peril by fusing the immediacy of action with the eternal quality of love. The novel's lasting importance stems from its capacity to convey the spirit of the human being, caught between the fleeting moment and the never-ending battle with mortality.

Keywords: Spanish Civil War, language, tragedy, human unity, mortality

1. Introduction

This fall it will be eighty-four years since Ernest Hemingway's novel *For Whom the Bell Tolls* was published. Over the decades, the intensity of the initial vehemence of this novel has faded, and its pathetic tone no longer reverberates with the same power as it once did. However, the humanistic intentions it embodies seem to become more apparent, and the brilliance of Hemingway's unmistakable style remains intact. Having crossed the threshold of eighty-four years, the novel seems destined for increased longevity, becoming a perennial declaration of one of the most dramatic moments of our century's consciousness: the first armed confrontation against fascism.

Literary critics of Hemingway's work, coming from various corners of the world, have demonstrated countless times, and sometimes with arguments so strong that they are difficult to refute, the falsity of many events described in the pages of his books. An eloquent example is that of the famous Spanish critic exiled after the end of the civil war, Arturo Barea, who chose to title his

article intended to expose the most notable of these inaccuracies: “Not Spain, but Hemingway.”¹ Of course, rarely and in few of these articles or studies was there a simple confrontation of the real events that took place on the territory of Spain during those bloody years with those described in the novel. Most of these analyses focused on destinies shaped in a historically well-determined temporal and geographical context. We cannot, therefore, speak of a proper misunderstanding, and these observations pay excessive and, at the same time, somewhat restrictive attention to the documentary dimension of the novel. Undoubtedly, the novel possesses a documentary value, but this value derives from the authenticity of some possible and significant human attitudes in the context of the decisive confrontation at that time, and not from a succession of minute details, which, although historical, are not always eloquent. It is relevant to note that, at the time of writing the novel, Hemingway had a deep knowledge of Spain and its inhabitants, life in the cities as well as those in the isolated settlements lost among the rugged and rocky mountains. The novels *The Sun Also Rises* (1926), *Death in the Afternoon* (1932), *The Spanish Earth* (1938), *The Fifth Column* (1938), together with the numerous stories in the volume *The First Forty-Nine Stories* (1938), reveal a deep and passionate knowledge of the Spanish spirit, as well as a subtle and empathetic understanding of the psychology of this people. This understanding was amplified and refined by Hemingway’s direct and prolonged involvement² in the fight against the fascist rebels in Spain. In this context, it might seem downright paradoxical that Hemingway, a writer whose work was essentially nourished by his life experiences, could have glossed over historical truth to such an extent as to ignore it. However, here comes the error of those who accuse the author of various “infidelities” towards the truth: a relative distortion of his artistic intentions within the novel. Thus, it came to contesting the constructive meaning of Robert Jordan’s struggle,³ imposing a mystical interpretation materialized through the concept of a “fifth dimension”⁴ and undermining the more advanced ideological progress reflected in the author’s work. Beyond the uncertainties hovering over the struggle waged by the *guerrilla* group in the novel *For Whom the Bell Tolls*—uncertainties shared by both the protagonist Robert Jordan and the author, resulting from a political understanding that is not always clear and complete—, it seems to me it is essential to note that the novel emphasizes, with unprecedented force, the effort to validate this struggle. It is a struggle of a man who is no longer isolated, but who, in order to live his own existence in harmony with himself, must be able to live for others and sometimes accept the ultimate sacrifice. It is remarkably suggestive of this interpretation that, even at the peak of his exacerbated and almost animalistic individualism, subjugated and finally defeated, Pablo, the treacherous leader of the novel’s *guerrilla* group, is forced to confess, after returning from his temporary desertion: “Having done such a thing there is a loneliness that cannot be borne.” (Hemingway, 1995, p. 119). From the “separate peace” and flight of Lieutenant Henry (*A Farewell to Arms*) to Harry Morgan’s belated understanding (*To Have and Have Not*) of the futility of solitary opposition against oppressive social forces, from Philip Rawlings’ renunciation (*The Fifth Column*) to an existence marked by ephemeral satisfactions, the journey has been long enough to state that the struggle waged by Jordan and those who support him represents an action of “extraordinary importance”, considering the “interests of humanity.” Even if in the end he can wait for a defeat, this does not in any way diminish the positive meaning of this road.

¹ Barea, A. (1941). *Not Spain, but Hemingway*. Horizon, London.

² During the Spanish Civil War, Ernest Hemingway was present as a correspondent for the American agency NANA (“North-American Newspaper Alliance”) during four distinct periods: initially, between February and May 1937; later, from August 1937 to January 1938; another stage followed from March to May 1938, and his last stay took place between September 1938 and the time of withdrawal from the Ebru River.

³ Geismar, M. (1942). *Writers in Crisis*, Boston. “At the heart of *For Whom the Bell Tolls* lies a fundamental ambiguity in Hemingway’s literary intentions. Although the novel aspires to be a celebration of human vitality, the destructive, subversive meaning that permeates the Hemingwayan subtext frequently opposes this ideal” (p. 82).

⁴ Carpenter, F. I. (1955). *American Literature and the Dream*, New York: “This mystical conception of a “five-dimensional” experience of the “perpetual present” might seem extravagant, but Hemingway first brought it to foreground in an explicit way and materialized it deliberately in his masterpiece (*For Whom the Bell Tolls*)”, p. 223.

Hemingway chose a unique narrative framework for his novel's events, highlighting their iconic character, through a sophisticated artistic knowledge of the nuance and intensity essential to support such a denouement. The scene of the action and the location where the *guerrilla* group lives appear to be isolated from the rest of the war's conflicts—and in a material sense, they actually are—but within this seemingly closed and restricted world, a network of vital connections to the world outside the mountains and the bridge that needs to be destroyed is made visible to everyone else. This is necessary in order to keep the connection with the outside world from being jeopardised.

Therefore, I don't think the somberly invocation-like phrases that are printed on the first pages of the novel *For Whom The Bell Tolls* are devoid of rhetorical meaning: "No man is an island,/ Entire of itself./ Each is a piece of the continent,/A part of the main. [...] Each man's death diminishes me,/For I am involved in mankind./ Therefore, send not to know/ For whom the bell tolls,/It tolls for thee." (1995, p. 56).

The novel's epigraphs, which decorate its pages and are attributed to the 17th-century English poet John Donne, go beyond a mere proof of human solidarity in the face of death. Their aim is to imbue a profound and intricate significance that surpasses human peculiarities and unity. These pages provide as a potent witness to human solidarity, one that shows itself not only in the face of death, which is inevitable, but also in the steadfast defence of justice, truth, beauty, and life—all of which are under attack from destruction and impermanence.

During the period in which the novel was published, the stated solidarity was evidently manifested, like the times evoked by the text of the novels, through the firm commitment in the fight against fascism. This solidarity took shape not only as an immediate reaction to the totalitarian threats of the era, but also as a deep expression of collective commitment to the values of humanity and justice in the face of dictatorship and oppression.

2. Hemingway's War: Activism and Aesthetic Reflection in Spain

In the broadcasts of the radio broadcaster from the small town on the African coast, Ceuta, on July 18, 1936, a simple phrase, but with deep connotations, was repeated, in apparent innocence: "All over Spain the sky is clear." This apparently benign wording was, in fact, the cryptic signal of the fascist rebellion against the Spanish nation, a true watchword marking the outbreak of fascist aggression against the young Iberian republic. In reality, the skies of Spain were to be filled with dark clouds, and the storm of blood and pain was to haunt the plains and mountains of Spain for nearly three years.

Since the inaugural year of the tumultuous decades, Ernest Hemingway, who in 1931 had enthusiastically expressed, through an article, his admiration for the overthrow of the monarchical regime in Spain, joined his fervor to the national cause of the Spanish people. Raising the considerable sum of \$40,000 to equip the Republican troops with ambulances and medical supplies, Hemingway did not perceive this as sufficient fulfillment of his obligations to the nation and the people he cherished with deep affection. In his view, active participation in the conflict and exposing the truth about the situation in Spain is the ultimate duty. Thus, in February 1937, he embarks on a protracted expedition, one too long for his eagerness to join the ranks of those who fought in arms to defend the freedom and dignity of a people who refused to be defeated by the united interventionist forces of Germany Hitler's, Mussolini's Italy and Spanish rebel generals.

The final destination of the itinerary is Madrid. The route begins with a sea crossing to France, followed by a flight from Toulouse to Barcelona, Valencia, and Alicante, culminating in a trip to the battlefields of Guadalajara and Brihuega. During this period, Hemingway is omnipresent in the locations where fascism is suffering decisive defeats. His reports, intended for American publications, are elaborated with the characteristic sobriety, signature of the one who affirmed that the essential thing is to faithfully transcribe what he observed. However, this time, not only the objectivity of the observer is evident, but also the deep emotional involvement. Hemingway did not limit himself to the status of a simple war correspondent of the "North American Newspaper Alliance" agency, through

which his messages of appreciation and solidarity towards the republican cause spread worldwide. Together with the famous Dutch filmmaker Jeris Ivens, the author starts making a film documentary dedicated to Spain, for which he writes both the script and the corresponding comments. Over the course of several weeks, the film crew, which included Hemingway, became deeply involved in the daily lives of those in the trenches around Madrid. They not only observed and documented the harsh reality of the war, but actively participated in the actions carried out by the *guerrillas* and intervened directly in the battles that were constantly unfolding.

In an article originally published in *Verve*⁵ magazine and later included in a booklet that also contained the script for *Spanish Earth*,⁶ Ernest Hemingway, whose input was not limited to the film's commentary but also included his vocal performance, describes the circumstances in which this testimony of a crucial moment in the history of peoples' struggle for freedom was elaborated. Thus, it becomes evident that Hemingway was not, nor could he remain, on the Spanish front, just a simple war correspondent; rather, he consistently acted as a true combatant:

Below us a battle was being fought. You could see it spread out below you and over the hills, could smell it, could taste the dust of it, and the noise of it was one great slithering sheet of rifle and automatic rifle fire rising and dropping, and in it came the crack of the guns and the bubbly rumbling of the outgoing shells fired from the batteries behind us, the thud of their bursts, and then the rolling yellow clouds of dust. But it was just too far to film well. We had tried working closer but they kept sniping at the camera and you could not work. [...] The day before we had been sniped out of a good place to film from and I had to crawl back holding the small camera to my belly, trying to keep my head lower than my shoulders, hitching along on my elbows, the bullets whocking into the brick wall over my back and twice spurting dirt over me. (Frohock, 1947, pp. 89-90).

In the second year of the Spanish Civil War, an event that turns out to be, from an obvious perspective, deeply personal, Ernest Hemingway returns to the United States after an absence of several months on the conflict front. On this occasion, he attends the second edition of the *Congress of American Writers*, where he gives his first "public speech." In this exposition, Hemingway powerfully reveals his motivations and beliefs that led him to engage in the conflict in Spain. His dissertation is notable for a vehement reaffirmation of anti-fascist convictions, reflecting a deep moral commitment and a sense of literary and political responsibility:

A writer who will not lie cannot live or work under fascism. [...] Because fascism is a lie, it is condemned to literary sterility. And when it is past, it will have no history; except the bloody history of murder that is well known and that a few of us have seen with our own eyes in the last few months. [...] When men fight for the freedom of their country against a foreign invasion, and when these men are your friends—some new friends and some of long-standing—and you know how they were attacked and how they fought, at first almost unarmed, you learn, watching them live and fight and die, that there are worse things than war. (Wiener, 2013, pp. 124-125).

Words, as if in a perpetual search for themselves, were not always this writer's fervent companions; he often combined the concrete of action with the abstract of writing. Thus, Hemingway did not stay long in the American territory, but returned to Spain, joining his comrades who, day by day, faced the dangers of the front. In one of the noisy corners of Madrid, in the "Florida" hotel, exposed to the bombardment of German interventionist batteries firing from the hills around the capital, Hemingway wrote the play *The Fifth Column*. In this work, the hero Philip Rawlings engages in risky war missions and recovers his dignity through opposition to lies and subservience, turning his possible death, initially perceived as a defeat, into a glorification of victory.

The intricate relationships between Hemingway's personal life and literary creation clearly go beyond a simple direct causal relationship. In my approach, I sought to evoke human figures, places and events, with the aim of suggesting an atmosphere and a series of ideas that, in a subtle way, will

⁵ *The Heat and the Cold*, Spring, 1938, p. 46.

⁶ Hemingway, E. (1938). *The Spanish Earth*. The J.B. Savage Company, Cleveland.

find expression in the novel that Hemingway began after the defeat of the troops Republicans from Spain. Although it is clear that not all the experiences lived by the writer will be found explicitly in the pages of this novel, or in his other works, and even less in a strict “documentary” sense, it can be stated that, in this case, more than in others, the biographical material, passed through the filter of deep convictions and a life experience marked by a profound humanity, finds numerous resonances and reflections in the work. A fundamental principle of Hemingway’s aesthetics - constantly validated and reiterated - is reaffirmed once again, which requires, as an essential premise of the creative act, a deep and rigorous knowledge of the realities explored in the writing. Thus, the biographical detail becomes a vector of authenticity, amplifying the veracity of the account of a human experience, which, beyond its strictly individual meanings, can acquire a universal resonance.

For Whom the Bell Tolls was conceived shortly after the fall of Madrid, a moment that marked the beginning of 18 years of work in which the author put forth tireless creative energy, fueled by an imperative need to express his profound conclusions on the confrontation between truth and falsity, between the elevation and degradation of the human condition, a confrontation in which he had been a witness and an active participant. Published in 1940, the novel represents a trenchant condemnation of the fascist expansion that was foreshadowed in Europe, thus becoming a veritable manifesto against tyranny.

Hemingway’s social and aesthetic thinking underwent a profound transformation after his experience on the bloody fields of Spain, evolving from the tragic conclusion of his hero in the novel *To Have and Have Not* (1939) — “No matter how a man alone ain’t got no bloody—chance” (Hemingway, 1987, p. 24) — to the emblematic epigraph of his new work: “No man is an island. Entire of itself. Each is a piece of the continent.” (1995, p. 6). These words, far from remaining a simple decorative motto, permeate the destiny of the novel’s characters, particularly that of the protagonist, the American intellectual Robert Jordan. From the outset, it is essential to emphasize that the reasons for his presence in the Spanish realm are not rooted in politics; a simple accident brings him to this place. However, in the context of fascist aggression, his presence and actions inevitably take on a political significance.

Moved into enemy territory with the mission to destroy a strategic bridge, under the protection and collaboration of a group of republican partisans (*guerrillas*) operating in the mountainous regions, Jordan externalizes, in diverse and complex contexts, his fervent anti-fascist convictions.

Asked about his identity, Jordan firmly replies: “No, I am an anti-fascist.” To the follow-up question: “For a long time?” he clarifies: “Since I have understood fascism.” (1995, p. 117). With this statement, the protagonist outlines an unwavering moral stance that will remain constant and gain depth throughout the narrative. Thus, although initially he encounters some mistrust from the *guerrilla* group, and the fulfillment of his task is marked by numerous obstacles, he cannot afford to abandon either his comrades or the mission entrusted to him: “[...] He fought now in this war because it had started in the country that he loved. [...] Here in Spain the Communists offered the best discipline and the soundest and sanest for the prosecution of the war.” (1995, p. 170).

His reflections on how he shapes his actions reveal that these convictions are the mature result of older meditations, born of observations of the circumstances in which the Republican struggle is being waged. Evoking the dense and tense atmosphere in the Communist headquarters in Madrid, he muses:

At either of those places you felt that you were taking part in a crusade. That was the only word for it although it was a word that had been so worn and abused that it no longer gave its true meaning. You felt, in spite of all bureaucracy and inefficiency and party strife, something that was like the feeling you expected to have and did not have when you made your first communion. It was a feeling of consecration to a duty toward all of the oppressed of the world which would be as difficult and embarrassing to speak about as religious experience and yet it was authentic as the feeling you had when you heard Bach, or stood in Chartres Cathedral or the Cathedral at Leon and saw the light coming through the great windows; or when you saw Mantegna and Greco and Brueghel in the Prado. It gave you a part in something that you could believe in wholly and completely and in which you felt

an absolute brotherhood with the others who were engaged in it. It was something that you had never known before but that you had experienced now and you gave such importance to it and the reasons for it that your own death seemed of complete unimportance; only a thing to be avoided because it would interfere with the performance of your duty. But the best thing was that there was something you could do about this feeling and this necessity too. You could fight. (1995, p. 128).

The adherence of this young American intellectual, apparently marked by mystical or perhaps even naive accents, turns, from both personal and universal considerations, into a deep conviction regarding the necessity of the fight against the enemies of the republic. Of course, not always his perspective on the unfolding of events, both on the battlefield and in the relations between the political forces and personalities involved in the conflict against fascism, turns out to be the correct one. The complex situation in Spain is often beyond his comprehension, just like Hemingway's, being far too complicated to be adequately judged at the time, or even from the perspective of the two years since the end of the civil war, which could have given the author a deeper understanding.

The events of the novel unfold with remarkable celerity, the author managing to concentrate the action and denouement in a span of about seventy hours. Through this temporal condensation, Hemingway gives the events a dimension that often transcends the material framework of the events narrated, amplifying them to the level of a universal meditation on human destiny. The narrative structure of the work, as already noted by critics, is concentric, pivoting around the bridge to be destroyed – a symbol of the ultimate sacrifice. This bridge, once blown up, not only precipitates the death of the protagonist, but, paradoxically, gives him a metaphysical extension of existence, extending his life beyond the abyss of temporality. The intensity of the novel increases exponentially through the way Hemingway makes the protagonists live, in this limited interval, capital, defining experiences that fundamentally change their existential trajectory, enrolling them in a time that seems to defy death itself. Robert Jordan does not go through this essential test of his existence—the transformation of his vague and sometimes naive beliefs into a firm certainty of duty to himself, expressed in the fulfillment of responsibilities to others—without experiencing deep fulfillment on other levels of life as well. This fulfillment, however, carries within it both the inevitable germ of its end and its transcendental projection into the future, beyond the limits of time.

Love gives the last three days lived by Jordan a sublime beauty, previously unknown, in a new and revealing light. Maria, a young Spanish girl of a purity unsullied by the ravages of life, infuses these days, marked by tragic forebodings, with a sense of strange and generous fullness. This love, which reveals itself to the two in a solar and explosive manifestation, faces the threat of death, accepting its inevitability without yielding to it:

But in the meantime all the life you have or ever will have is today, tonight, tomorrow, today, tonight, tomorrow, over and over again (I hope), he thought and so you had better take what time there is and be very thankful for it. If the bridge goes well. [...] It doesn't look too good just now. [...] Maybe that is what I am to get now from life. Maybe that is my life and instead of it being threescore years and ten it is fortyeight hours or just threescore hours and ten or twelve rather. [...]

I suppose it is possible to live as full a life in seventy hours as in seventy years. [...] So if your life trades its seventy years for seventy hours I have that value now and I am lucky enough to know it. And if there is not any such thing as a long time, nor the rest of your lives, nor from now on, but there is only now, why then now is the thing to praise and I am very happy with it. Now, ahora, maintenant, heute. Now, it has a funny sound to be a whole world and your life. Esta noche, tonight, ce soir, heute abend. (1995, p. 44).

The feeling of an inexorable end gives the few days that the members of the *guerrilla* group spend together a special gravity, marking them with a profound uniqueness. Hemingway manages to accentuate this feeling both in the actual unfolding of the action and through his significant illumination in reminiscences and temporal projections. This feeling is also reflected in the specific fervor of the narrative tone of the work, a tone which, through its accents of pathos, contributes to

the rarely disturbed intensity of the entire novel.

By choosing a moment of maximum intensity, when human consciousness is in a deep and supreme identification with itself, the author manages to reveal the deep essence of the nature of his heroes. This revelation is imbued with subtle and complex contradictions: harshness intertwines with delicacy, cowardice coexists with courage, and treachery opposes loyalty. Under the light of the impending end, the characters, along with their actions, take on a clear and distinct outline, each defined by well-defined and sure features.

Pablo, the former leader of the *guerrilla* group, has now turned into a potential adversary, thanks to his cunning, which allows him to see the impending collapse of the whole operation and be pushed to seek a safer haven. However, he is the one who returns among the guerrilla fighters, not only because of the impossibility of finding refuge, but also because after such a job, an unbearable loneliness gripped him.

Pilar, his wife, who revels in earthly voluptuousness and the ephemeral joys of existence, subordinates the uncertainty of the inevitable end to the urgent need for their action. In a profound display of visceral pragmatism, she urges Pablo to return to the arenas of conflict, thus underscoring the imperative to continue fighting in the face of impending disintegration.

It is remarkable how, in this woman, delicacy fuses with an almost merciless firmness, and human reactions interweave with a deep understanding of the unrelenting necessities of confrontation. Although many commentators on the work have rightly reproached the author for the brutality and often ferocious details of the episode of the execution of the fascists in the small hometown of Pilar and Pablo, very few have emphasized the profound significance of Pilar's reactions to each stage of this execution. These reactions reflect not only the personal perception of the excesses committed, but also the moral and psychological complexity of the moment. In conclusion, the narrative, despite its harshness and brevity, cannot be reduced to just the few but extremely eloquent words with which Pilar ends her story:

"Then I went back inside the room and I sat there and I did not wish to think for that was the worst day of my life until one other day."

"What was the other?"

"Three days later when the fascists took the town." (1995, p. 72).

Maria, the symbol of innocence in the face of fascist brutality, finds in the perfect and sublime love between her and Jordan a way out of the labyrinth of her inner suffering. This love connection, marked by a transcendent purity and a tragic dimension, is evoked with a subtlety that, although it does not fall into pessimism, is deeply moving. The moments of tenderness between them are imbued with a melancholic elegance that reflects both the fragility and the nobility of their feelings.

From the perspective of conceptualizing love as a supreme limit at the intersection of existence and death, the encounter between Maria and Jordan, unfolding in the mountainous setting of the insurgent territory, acquires a profound valence of existential realization. Hemingway thus reconfigures the tragic appearance of this meeting into a manifestation of vital fullness, which the hero will experience in maximum intensity at the end of the three days. In this configuration, the love between the two becomes a symbol of that love that integrates man into the cosmic rhythm of the stars, the seasons and the mysterious dynamics of the earth. Portrayed as a solar burst, effervescent and vital, this love palpably illuminates Jordan's final days.

Maria is portrayed as a daughter of the generous sun of Spain, with hair like "the golden brown of a grain field" and eyes "tawny brown." (Hemingway, p. 13). These feminine portraits of Maria often evoke the paintings of Van Gogh, with their explosion of light and sunshine.

Distinctly from his other works, Hemingway, through the deep values he gives to this love, does not place his heroes in an amorphous time, located outside the temporal coordinates and reality, but anchors them with intensity and drama in the present immediate. In this confrontation with temporality, in this deeply human conflict to master time and unfavorable conditions, Hemingway

manages to harmoniously integrate the two planes of existence: that of action destined to fulfill certain convictions and that of love. Thus, the two dimensions complement each other in a natural way, contributing to the configuration of a human experience of deep and generous meanings.

Jordan, along with his *guerilla* group, manages to complete their mission successfully, but during the retreat, he suffers a severe leg fracture. Unable to evacuate, he is forced to stay put and face the onslaught of his pursuers alone. The separation from Maria and his comrades is obviously a deeply tragic one; however, in this episode, the author manages to outline a special literary page, in which love transfigures the drama of the moment into an overwhelming sense of continuity and human solidarity in the face of imminent destruction:

"I love thee, Maria," he said. "And no one has done anything to thee. Thee, they cannot touch. No one has touched thee, little rabbit."

"You believe that?"

"I know it."

"And you can love me?" warm again against him now.

"I can love thee more."

"I will try to kiss thee very well."

"Kiss me a little."

"I do not know how."

"Just kiss me." (Hemingway, p. 234).

Robert Jordan is once more laying amid the pine branches and leaning against a tree trunk, waiting for the enemy to appear—just like he does in the opening chapters of the book. Despite being by himself, he is not alone; rather, his seclusion is an extension of his relationship with others and a continuance of their absence. This loneliness is only a continuation of their journey, a shared experience where his uniqueness is fulfilled and mirrored in the absence of others who departed with him:

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. You've had just as good a life as grandfather's though not as long. You've had as good a life as any one because of these last days. (Hemingway, p. 249).

On this last day, the intense journey of Robert Jordan ends, the iconic character who, as presented from the first page of the novel, prepares to face his enemy, weapon in hand. In this context, as some literary critics have pointed out, the obsession with mortality, a recurring leitmotif in Hemingway's work, is defeated. Death, in this situation, is but a tribute to the life he eagerly awaited. Thus, this time, the hero "manages to triumph over the fatality that stalks him." (Young, 1952, p. 86).

3. Hemingway's Tragic Mode in *For Whom the Bell Tolls*

A moment of crucial importance in Hemingway's literary corpus, the novel *For Whom the Bell Tolls* has often been compared, in terms of epic scope, to the *Iliad*. This analogy relies on certain framework elements which, while interesting, cannot be considered essential. Thus, I would argue that a more appropriate analogy would be that of the unfolding of an ancient tragedy. And when I say this, I am not only referring to the strict observance of the units of time and space, but especially to the tragic confrontation with destiny, specific to the ancient tragedies. In this confrontation, there is a subtlety and a grandeur that gives remarkable depth to events and characters, shaping them with undeniable force. This time, man transcends the limits imposed by destiny, time and death, through the unparalleled power with which he affirms his convictions and through the strength with which the sense of duty towards them harmoniously intertwines with the sense of solidarity in the face of a common danger. Thus, even when the confrontation ends on a tragic note, it does not cease to be a

victory over death and the threats exerted by the dark forces of destiny. The intensity with which these ideas are conveyed to us is a direct result of the artistic mastery with which Hemingway conceived and articulated this novel, a chronicle of the last seventy hours of the existence of one of the countless combatants who stood heroically on the bloody soil of Spain against fascist aggression.

As has been consistently noted, Hemingway shapes his characters through a subtle use of suggestion, expressed through descriptive elements that seem external at first glance. In this context, the characters acquire a remarkable depth, being highlighted by their connections with the facts and experiences of the past. The unfolding of events is thus no longer limited to the conventional coordinates of time and space; on the contrary, the consciousness of the characters imposes itself as a new and powerful dimension, not just suggested, as in previous works, but explicitly expressed, becoming an omnipresent factor. This consciousness intertwines the present of the characters with their moral structure, highlighting that they are no longer, as in other novels, simple static entities, but beings in continuous evolution, which are perfected through the prism of new life experiences, analyzed both in the light of the past and of the present. Only in this way, the great idea that animates the entire novel transcends the simple statement and becomes a deeply moving account of the heroic confrontation between people and their implacable destiny. Through this particularization, the struggle acquires a universal meaning, and the action of the guerrilla group led by Robert Jordan takes on the authentic dimensions and resonances of a classical tragedy. However, in this context, the struggle does not end in inevitable defeat, but, although paid at an exorbitant price, ends in triumphant victory.

Therefore, I consider unfounded the opinion of literary critics such as Maxwell Geismar, who claim that the novel “only sporadically reveals the depths and subtleties of its theme” or that “its protagonists are completely devoid of verisimilitude...” (Geismar, 1947, p. 177).

The entire novel exudes a distinctive aura, constructed through the complex social relationships between Jordan and the other members of the *guerrilla* group, as well as between Jordan and Maria. The characters and atmosphere of the novel are exquisitely sculpted through a particularly elegant and sophisticated language, often imbued with dignified solemnity and subtle poetry, and at other times, through genuine and savory humor. The author, with remarkable mastery, resorted to a fusion of Marlowe's and Shakespeare's styles, thereby giving the narrative epic an additional dramatic density. This linguistic alchemy not only enriches the texture of the text, but also contributes essentially to intensifying the emotional and aesthetic impact of the events narrated. (Baker, 1956, p. 248).

In Hemingway's work, especially in the novel *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, there is a deeply interdependent relationship between the message conveyed and the way of expression, a relationship that is impregnated with subtle nuances and remarkable suggestiveness. In this work, Hemingway revives a distinct harmony between conceptual content and narrative style, thus creating a literary synergy that enhances the emotional and intellectual impact of the text. This interaction between “what is said” and “how to say it” is treated with a sophistication that amplifies the complexity and depth of the narrative, giving the reader a special aesthetic experience.

Without entering into the extensive details required for an exhaustive analysis, in which apparently marginal linguistic specificities essentially outline a certain literary vision and a distinct stylistic attitude (which would, moreover, involve numerous examples of rarer nuances and etymologies of the English language and Spanish), I feel the need to emphasize the importance of the suggestions expressed, obviously intentionally, through the construction of that unusual language through which the novel's characters communicate. The combination of the familiar and the pathetic, the vulgar and the grandiose, the natural and the artificial, is not reduced exclusively to linguistic subtleties. In fact, as the American critic Edward Fenimore has observed, the distinct aura that envelops the whole unfolding of the work is not exclusively determined by the verbal relations between its characters, although they contribute crucially to shaping this aura. (Fenimore, 1943, p. 144).

In his dialogues with the group of guerrillas, Jordan's use of Spanish facilitates a subversion and

transfiguration of everyday English for the author, thus giving Hemingway the opportunity to reconstruct these interactions and reevaluate them through a distinct verbal construction and a well-determined tone. Although the Spanish is never completely forgotten, the writer, in the process of translating or transposing into English—sometimes in an unusual or familiar English, and even, as linguists observe, with a sometimes artificial construction—achieves his goal of creating a poetic tone, vibrant and solemn:

It was inevitable that this tone of Elizabethan expressions - writes Edward Fenimore - would haunt the pages written by Hemingway. A large part of the epicness of his story lies in its breadth, in the simple fact that his characters mean more than themselves, the action in which they are engaged moving towards an undoubted climax, determined by deeply national forces, or if we accept the implications of the title, of universal forces. In the Elizabethan language, English has an epic language at hand... (1943, p. 196).

As I pointed out at the beginning, the epic nature of the novel is characterized by a deep immersion in the most tumultuous moments of contemporary history. The temporal and geographical contextualization is undoubtedly meticulously done. However, the way the writer shapes his narrative generates a sophisticated effect of transfiguring the action and the heroes, placing them in a symbolic framework that reflects the forces and conflicts presented in the text. This technique gives a remarkable intensity to the facts and ideas presented in the work, amplifying their impact on the lecturer.

Dialogue, especially in a work signed by Hemingway, plays a crucial role in shaping the atmosphere and essence of the text. In this work, the dialogue or reflections on it are elaborated in a subtle blend of English and Spanish, or in a variant English with distinct structure and intentionality. Through this technique, the atmosphere of many sequences in the novel, which describe an apparently isolated universe in time and space or an imaginary constructed universe, is deeply amplified. At the same time, this fictitious condition of the unfolding of events provokes a fervent debate on the need to integrate the individual in the context of the current world. The positive outcome of this debate is achieved through significant sacrifice and proves essential to human destiny, both individually and collectively, and is achieved through continuous struggle.

In this context, we find the same perpetual tendency to transcend the dichotomy between substance and intention in the artistic expression of Hemingway's work. Indeed, the behavioral nature of his stylistics is frequently reconfigured and reinterpreted from innovative perspectives, thus reflecting a constant dynamic between expressive materiality and creative intentions. This interpretive mobility highlights how Hemingway often deviates from established stylistic conventions, offering a continuous reassessment of the relationship between literary content and its modes of artistic expression.

4. Conclusion

Eighty-four years have passed since the publication of the masterpiece *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. The intervening decades have cemented the stature of this iconic novel and amplified the fascination with its complex characters. Over time, careful reading and critical analysis have allowed a deeper and more nuanced appreciation of the work, confirming as it were the prophetic words of the American critic Ralph Thompson uttered at the beginning of this work:

Mr. Hemingway has always been the writer, but he has never been the master that he is in For Whom the Bell Tolls. The dialogue, handled as though in translation from the Spanish, is incomparable. The characters are modeled in high relief. A few of the scenes are perfect, notably the last sequence and an earlier one when Jordan wakes up to the sound of a horse thumping along through the snow. Others are intense and terrifying, still others gentle and almost pastoral, if here and there a trifle sweet. (Ralph, 1940, p. 15).

Indeed, this occurrence can be attributed, to a certain extent, to the profound influence that the words of John Donne exert on Hemingway's literary creation. In his novel, Hemingway challenges us, in a subtle and introspective manner, to reflect again on the essential implications of the idea that: "No man is an island,/Entire of itself./Each is a piece of the continent,/ A part of the main." (Hemingway, 1995, p. 6).

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