IS PABLO AN ANTI-HERO OR A HERO IN \textit{FOR WHOM THE BELL TOLLS}?

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A survey of sixty years of criticism of Hemingway’s \textit{For Whom the Bell Tolls} shows the critical reputation of the book in different political, social and cultural circumstances. The book was widely accepted by the readers when it was published and sold nearly half a million copies within six months after it came out. On the other hand, critics viewed the book differently. Rene Sanderson summarizes the critical reception as follows:

There have been several steps in the critical reception: First, a debate between realists and symbolists in the forties; second, the attention paid to biography, the Hemingway Hero, and the “code” during the fifties; third, the effect of Hemingway’s suicide on scholarly interest during the sixties; fourth, during the seventies, the reappearance of more varied criticism of Hemingway’s work generally, but a disproportionate lack of interest in \textit{For Whom the Bell Tolls}; and fifth, during the eighties, a strong revival of Hemingway scholarship, with the establishment of the Hemingway collection at the Kennedy Library, the founding of the Hemingway Society, and the spread of new critical theories. (Sanderson 5)

Critics who objected to the novel based their objection on their political and social views which reveal negative response to Hemingway’s moral and intellectual inability.

Hemingway’s letter (25 March, 1939) to Ivan Kashkeen, Hemingway’s Russian translator and critic, expresses his intention of
having multidimensional points of view in the novel to describe the complexity of the Spanish Civil War. Hemingway writes:

For your information in stories about the war I try to show all the different sides of it, taking it slowly and honestly and examining it from many ways. So never think one story represents my viewpoint because it is much too complicated for that. [...] I would like to be able to write understandably about both deserters and heroes, cowards and brave men, traitors and men who are not capable of being traitors. I learned a lot about all such people. (Letters 480)

This historico-literary scheme is different from the approach in his previous novels. Hemingway tried to create a new form of literature as the polyphonic novel with various voices from various characters. Polyphony of valid voices composes an orchestration in the case of Hemingway’s literature, especially in the case of For Whom the Bell Tolls.¹

Hemingway fully understood when he started to write the novel that the contradictions and complexities were the characteristic of the Spanish Civil War. Through a plurality of independent voices, each valid, Hemingway showed the complexity of the war.

For example, Robert Jordan, the protagonist, does not serve as a vehicle for the author’s own ideological position; as the main character, he expresses his own opinion and knowledge. More important than Robert Jordan, who is assigned to blow up a bridge, is the event through which Hemingway shows multiple point of views to reflect the whole course of the Spanish Civil War.

Typically, the consciousness of a character is given as someone else’s consciousness, but it really reflects the author’s consciousness. According to the critics, Hemingway expresses ambiguous political and ideological concept through Robert Jordan who does not reveal his own ideas. For example, Jordan thinks: “You’re not a real Marxist and you know it. You believe in Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. You
believe in Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness. [ . . . ] If this war is lost all of those things are lost” (305).

A critic, Mark C. Van Gunten admits that “the reader’s task in encountering the novel is similar to Robert Jordan’s: Discerning ‘meaning’ and ‘truth’ in the various texts (stories, histories, dreams, superstitions, signs, and so on) that compete for attention amidst the general chaos of the war itself” (Van Gunten 144).

Each character has equal rights and power in this narrative, and their own voices: Anselmo, for example, is a representative of old, wise, Spanish peasants; the Gypsy, an archetypal character as a clown among the Spanish people; Rafael, a simple, common Spanish peasant type and so on. If the novel is understood in this way, it provides a polyphonic report of the war.

These aspects of the novel reveal its complex narrativity: At the first switch of narrativity from Robert Jordan to Pilar at the last scene of Chapter 4 (58), the readers may predict that they will see the inner conflict of other people except Jordan, which may also add another level of complexity and depth to the novel. This plurality of consciousness shows concrete and integral consciousness of the characters.

Not only is the narrativity different from Hemingway’s former novels, but also the complexity of the structure of the novel which is described and observed by plural point of views; one of the most significant point of views appears while Robert Jordan remains in the mountain with the guerillas, when his messenger boy drives through the front and is stopped by his comrades; all the incidents are observed by another camera-eye which is away from the place where Robert Jordan is.

If the represented world which Hemingway describes in his novel is observed by monologic visualization, it will be perceived as chaos since there seems no unified ideological point of view. Although Hemingway’s sympathies lay with the Royalist side, he describes them through Pilar’s report on the Royalists’ brutality against the Fascists in Ronda. Maria’s experience of being abused and raped by the Fascists is juxtaposed with the Pilar’s story of the massacre of Fascists in her
town.

In addition to the conflicts between the Royalists and the Fascists, there has been confusion, suspicion and disruption among the Royalists themselves. From the very beginning of the whole affair, since Robert Jordan arrives at the place where Pablo and his guerrillas live, it seems the destiny of Robert Jordan has been controlled by Pablo who has a narrow concept of safety and victory. The most egocentric reaction against others reveals when he kills the Fascists in the town. However, Pablo’s manner and concept toward the war is limited in his own tribal way which is symbolized as the failure of the Republic being organized by the unity of small tribal groups of guerrillas. In addition, it turns out to be worse when those tribe-oriented people are suspicious of foreigners who belong to the International Brigade.

The treacherous and experienced Pablo, both intentionally and unintentionally, confuses Jordan’s nationality and his ethnicity between British and Scottish, but never identifies him as an American which may deprive Jordan’s authorized function as being an American intellectual militant. His power is symbolized by two identification with stamps; one is S.I.M. (Service of the Military Intelligence) and the other is a General Staff (10).

Pablo, being a leader of the guerrillas, turns awkward and becomes conscious of his own and his people’s security; he is an anti-heroic character who is an obstacle to Robert Jordan. The conversation between Pablo and Robert Jordan reveals that Pablo superimposes Jordan upon Kashkin who are both simply foreigners for him.

“There was a foreigner with us who made the explosion, Pablo said.

“Do you know him?”

“Kashkin, “Robert Jordan said. (14, italics mine)

Pablo hardly ever remembers Kashkin except what he has done and the fact that he was a foreigner. Later he emphasizes the fact that Robert Jordan is simply a foreigner who never belongs to his guerrillas, nor to
the Spanish people. He rejects Jordan as his comrade.

From the very beginning when they met first, Pablo shows hostility to Jordan since he is a "foreigner" and the outsider who invades his territory. His hostility to Jordan is reflected in various scenes. Pablo, who avoids using Robert's name, intentionally calls him "Ingles," and tries to insult him by asking him about his clothing: "When you are wearing those skirts [...] what do you wear under them?" (206); "He's a false professor," Pablo said. "He hasn't got beard" (210). Pablo insults Jordan's masculinity by emphasizing his femininity and to deprive his leadership regains his power among the guerrillas.

Ironically, Pablo, being illiterate, tries to reject Robert Jordan, a foreign college instructor, because he is unable to read the documents which Jordan carries to identify him. Others share this illiteracy; Anselmo's illiteracy and his ignorance about cars, which are major vehicle for transportation and deeply associated with the bridge itself, causes the tragedy. Anselmo is assigned to check the cars which pass the roads. Hemingway describes details through Anselmo's eye: "It came up the snow-covered road, green and brown painted, in broken patches of daubed color, the windows blued over so that you could not see in, with only a half circle left clear in the blue for the occupants to look out through. It was a two-year-old Rolls-Royce town car camouflaged for the use of the General Staff but Anselmo did not know" (191). Anselmo was simply assigned to count the numbers of the cars and trucks which pass the road, but not expected to distinguish the difference of the various cars which reflect the military ranks. Their moves reveal that the Fascists find out the secret project of the Royalists who are planning an aerial bombardment and tries to anticipate their enemy's attack. The leaking of the secret orders is not Jordan's fault, but his careless judgments reveal a lack of his ability of being the military intelligence.

Erik Nakajavani says: "He [Robert Jordan] accomplishes his mission superbly in the light of his formidable knowledge. The eventual failure of the objective of his mission is in no way due to Robert Jordan's lack of knowledge and ability to succeed but to the
ignorance, treachery and importance of others and the dark, mysterious forces of nature" (144).

Since Nakajavani admits "the ignorance, treachery and importance of others and the dark, mysterious forces of nature" obstruct Jordan's mission of blowing the bridge, the failure itself was not caused directly by Jordan's lack of ability; however, those elements reveal the complexity of the Spanish Civil War through Hemingway's objective description and insight.

Once, Maxwell Parkins suggests that the detail described by Pilar of "the smell of death" in Chapter 19 should be shortened or cut since it might "delay the story possibly longer than is advantageous (The Only Thing 288).

Hemingway responds to this suggestion:

"About the smell of earth part. Unless this will impair the sale of the book seriously or cause its suppression I think it is necessary to leave it in. I have to make many effects that do not show at the time and it is like takeing [sic] either the bass viol or the oboe out of my orchestra because they each make an ugly noise when played alone. (The Only Thing 290)

"Ugly noise" is a metaphor which echoes the various kinds of discord and disharmonious elements of the novel: Hemingway disagrees with his editor, Maxwell Perkin's suggestion to take out the scene of Pilar's prediction of Jordan's death and the smell of death.

Hemingway's technique of the orchestral in the novel is deeply associated with this "ugly noise" which is also caused by various voices of the people. Pablo is the crucial one who makes "ugly noise" and disturbs the harmony of the orchestra which is led by Robert Jordan.

Hemingway himself addresses this issue in a 1940 letter to Maxwell Perkins: "There is the balancing [sic] of Jordan's good sense and sound skepticism against this gypsy crap which isn't all crap" (Letters 508). This meditation of the opposing discourses of "good sense" and "gypsy crap" resembles the admixture of historical "reality" and fiction
that makes up *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. The reader’s task in encountering the novel is similar to Robert Jordan’s.

Hemingway’s other work on the Spanish Civil War, the film “The Spanish Earth” with John Dos Passos and Lillian Hellman reflects the Spanish peasants’ creativity to construct ditches and cultivate their land. Hemingway describes both aspects of the war, destruction and construction by the people.

Through Hemingway’s narration of the movie, “The Spanish Earth,” we hear his voice and words in the first scene:

This Spanish earth is dry and hard—And the face of workers there are hard and dry from the sun. This worthless land would be watered to yield much. For fifty years, we wanted to irrigate but they held us back. Now we will bring water to it to raise food for the defense of Madrid. (“The Spanish Earth” n. pag.)

Herman Nibelink sees an ironic tone in the very beginning of the novel through the eyes of Jordan when he observes the view in front of him: Nibelink indicates an omen of danger in the scene of “the dark of the oiled road” which exists in the midst of paradise (Nibelink 165). Both nature itself and circumstance are described as an omen which is another element of destruction of the harmony of his realm.

Pablo’s reaction against the mission of blowing up the bridge never changes from the very beginning when he hears the plan from Robert Jordan. First, he does not want to move from the cave and the atmosphere where he and his people have been. Second, he sees the danger of the scheme and he realizes he could be killed by the battle with the Fascists.

The destruction of the trains and the bridges are supported by highly trained mechanics with the help of the foreign intelligence; on the other hand, those foreigners tell the guerrillas what they should do. There is a clear conflict between the natives of Spain and the International Brigade. As Pablo expresses his own feeling against the order of blowing up “his” bridge, he is a representative of the common Spanish

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peasants: “This foreigner [Robert Jordan] comes here to do a thing for the good of the foreigners. For his good we must be sacrificed. I am for the good and the safety of all” (54).

Jordan’s mission to dynamite the bridge, although it has an immediate purpose of cutting the route of the enemy’s transportation, is obviously destructive rather than constructive, which reflects the tragedy of a civil war; the destruction itself is ironically a mission of destroying his own land and country.

The bridge is, on one level, a metaphor of connection which provides two different things: such as the professional army of the Fascists vs. the Royalists, the aggregate of non-professional, untrained guerrilla; the local peasants vs. the foreigners of the International Brigade. After all, this war is the Spanish Civil War and the International Brigades and other foreigners are, as a result, outsiders. Both the trains and bridges, which are the most important facilities for transportation on the ground, are destroyed by the foreign volunteers; as the result of the Civil War, the Spanish land remained devastated for many decades after the war. We realize the reason why Pablo tries to possess the horses is based on his tribal ideology. Pablo knows how to survive in the war since he knows both the trains and bridges have been lost and the horses are the most important means of transportation.

Kashkin is a centralized character among the guerrillas and seems to be the only foreigner that they have fought with; Robert Jordan reminds them of him as another "foreigner" they have come across; the more they talk about him and ask his end, the more it reveals the double image of both "foreigners." Kashkin’s name is hardly remembered by anybody of the guerrillas despite the fact that he left a clear memory of being a foreigner and a good mechanic who blew up trains. That may suggest to us that they also remember Robert Jordan as another skillful mechanical foreigner after he dies and that eventually his name will be erased in their memory.

Erik Nakajavani’s study of For Whom the Bell Tolls, titled “Knowledge as Power: Robert Jordan as an Intellectual Hero,” expresses fully Robert Jordan’s heroic aspects; however, we also see
Robert Jordan's careless unheroic aspects in his manner and decision. This unheroic aspect may add more delicate and complex characteristics of Jordan himself and the novel itself. The failure of Jordan's efforts reveals the complexity and absurdity of the modern war, often being affected by instinct and supernatural power, which is beyond the control of human knowledge and wisdom.

The supernatural power of a gypsy to predict future events is somehow shared by others: in answer to Pablo, in the very begining of the novel, who asks where they can go if it is necessary to leave the place where they now stay: "In Spain there are many mountains. There are the Sierra de Gredos if one leaves here" (15). When Pablo and his guerrillas have to leave after the explosion of the bridge, in the end of the novel, he decides to go to the Sierra de Gredos against Robert's insistence that they remain inside the Republic. Robert Jordan suggests: "I think you would be better in the Republic," but Pablo insists "Nat. I am for Gredos" (462). Gredos is another mountainous area to hide and away from the direct control of the Republic. The arguments between Jordan and Pablo reveal again Pablo's narrow sightedness as a leader with merely a tribal oriented outlook. Jordan has already realized his inability of controlling this man when Pablo kills other tribal guerrillas after they helped him to fight against the Fascists simply for saving horses. Jordan thinks: "This is an inter-tribal matter. Don't make moral judgments" (455). Jordan's resignation of moral judgment and lack of power of controlling the people reveals his position and status in the war. Pablo, who regains his own power as the leader of his guerrillas, seems intentionally to order that Jordan is the last one who runs through the road under the enemy's firing: "Thou canst come at the end if thou will, Ingles" (457) since he knows the first is the safest, and the last one is the one who faces the most dangerous condition under the fire.

Despite the fact that Hemingway started to write this novel after the war ended, he writes through Robert Jordan: "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 (467).
In 1942, two years after the publication of *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, Hemingway wrote in an introduction to *Men at War: The Best War Stories of All Time*: “I have seen much war in my lifetime and I hate it profoundly. But there are worse things than war; and all of them come with defeat. The more you hate war, the more you know that once you are forced into it, for whatever reason it may be, you have to win it” (19).

The collapse inside of the Royalists started from the very beginning of the war; Robert Jordan, an “Ingles” and a foreigner remains an outsider among Pablo and his people. The “inter-tribal matter” was once controlled by the Fascist regime over thirty years under Franco’s autocracy. The real end of the Civil War, which was caused by Franco’s death in 1975, makes Pablo’s descendants the true heroes in Spain in the effort to unite the nation by keeping inter-tribal ideology in their mind while adjusting themselves to the new political conditions. In the 21st century, since Spain has become one of the EU countries, the Spanish people in various regions have started to insist on their own independence and autonomy after 30 years of Franco’s suppression. The postwar era ends and the autocracy turns to be formed into the democratic regime. For whom the bell tolls? It tolls for thee, Robert Jordan and the dead. However, the true winners are the survivors in the war.

*The original version of this essay was delivered as a paper at “HEMINGWAY IN ANDALUSIA” 12th INTERNATIONAL HEMINGWAY CONFERENCE, in Malaga and Ronda, Spain, in June 2006.

**NOTE**

1. The concept of “polyphony” is based on Mikhail Bakhtin’s *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*. Bakhtin expresses: “Dostoevsky is the creator of the polyphonic novel. He created a fundamentally new novelistic genre. Therefore his work does not fit any of the preconceived framework or historico-literary schemes that we usually apply to various species of the European novel [. . .]. From the viewpoint of a consistently monologic visualization and understanding of the represented world,
the viewpoint of some monologic canon for the proper construction of novels” (Bakhtin 7–8).

WORKS CITED


APPENDIX WITH PHOTOS

1. Hemingway describes the cliff of Ronda in *For Whom the Bell Tolls*:

   "What happened to the others?" Robert Jordan asked.
   "Were there no other fascists in the village?"
   "Qué va, were there no other fascists? There were more than twenty. But none was shot."
   "What was done?"
   "Pablo had them beaten to death with flails and thrown from the top of the cliff into the river."
   "All twenty?"
   "I [Pilar] will tell you. It is not so simple. And in my life never do I wish to see such a scene as the flailing to death in the plaza on the top of the cliff above the river.

   The town [Ronda] is built on the high bank above the river and there is a square there with a fountain and there are benches and there are big trees that give a shade for the benches. The balconies of the houses look out on the plaza. Six streets enter on the plaza and there is an arcade from the houses that goes around the plaza so that one can walk in the shade of the arcade and on the fourth side is the walk shaded by the tress beside the edge of the cliff with, far below, the river. It is three hundred feet down to the river. (103)
Photo 3. "HEMINGWAY IN ANDALUSIA" 12TH INTERNATIONAL HEMINGWAY CONFERENCE poster.

Photo 4. The speakers of the session "For Whom the Bell Tolls: Heroes and Anti-Heroes. Imamura (left) reading his paper; Jackson Bryre (center), the moderator; Raymond M. Vince (Jackson's right); Lawrence R. Broer (right).

Photo 5. Debra A. Moddelmog (left), the author of Reading Desire: In Pursuit of Ernest Hemingway (1999); Loi (center), Debra's friend; Imamura (right). Having lunch on the street of Ronda.