

## The Metaphysical Influence Of Symbolism In Ernest Hemingway's *For Whom The Bell Tolls*

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### Abstract

This paper examines Ernest Hemingway's *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1940) focusing on the prominent core symbols that have been interpreted from many perspectives. The novel chronicles the tale of American teacher Robert Jordan, who enlists in the antifascist Loyalist army, and is set in the vicinity of Segovia, Spain, in 1937. He is to contact a band of guerrillas and blow up a bridge to further the Loyalist onslaught. He spends 72 hours at the guerilla camp, during which time the action takes place. During this time, he befriends Pablo, the cunning but cowardly guerrilla leader, and his brave wife Pilar, and falls in love with María, who has been sexually assaulted by fascist soldiers. After breaking down the bridge, Jordan sustains injuries, but Pablo, Pilar, María, and two other guerrillas manage to flee. He tells María he loves her again and waits for the fascist army and inevitable death. The symbols that linger over the main topics of Hemmingway's fiction serve as a constant reminder to the reader of human progress made possible by the advancement of violent and warlike means used to destroy human life.

**Keywords:** Human, War, Symbol, Life, Death

### The Metaphysical Influence of Symbolism in Ernest Hemingway's *For Whom the Bell Tolls*

There are numerous reasons why Ernest Hemingway is regarded as the most important writer of the early 20th century, and these reasons encourage readers and scholars to consider the aesthetic ideals and significance of his works, which he used to guide society. Examining Hemingway's works will make it easier to follow the thread of his deft use of symbolism and subtle symbolism to capture the imagination of a society that was rapidly degenerating into the most heinous acts that could endanger humankind.

The power of the ideology that gives rise to the conviction to devise a strategy for each person involved in such fights, such as the Spanish struggle, which is eloquently portrayed in *For Whom the Bell Tolls* through a sequence of symbols, takes on a cinematic effect. Every social class participates in the battle. Through the symbols that Hemingway uses to subtly influence his readers, to make them aware of the change that has entered their lives, and to keep manipulating every group and create sharp divisions that plague society to this day, he so masterfully brings out this paradigmatic shift from the pre-20th century in the lives of the common man. He utilises the novel as a forum to discuss his thoughts on the political changes taking place in Spain. Instead of overtly engaging in political propaganda using his literary prowess, he subtly incorporates the Civil War into the narrative to express his views on the state of society. The Spanish Civil War is involving the world's superpowers. Their differing philosophies are the root of the conflict between the two factions. Since the monarchy commanded by King Alfonso was unable to provide them with just governance, they sought to build their own democracy. The intense feelings that the Spanish people have are explored in the novel.

Hemingway closely followed the development of Spain's political system because he was aware of how people were moving forward in Europe following World War I. The Civil War was one way that the people's restlessness showed itself, forcing the Spanish people to side with one of the factions. This movement - of which the Catholic Church was a major force - led social observers like Hemingway to question the place of religion and religious leaders in the life of the average person. He opposes the way that the clerics assisted fascists in tearing apart Spain. His post-war novel was written without any political or propaganda intent. He saw the war as a tragedy that destroyed the stunning nation of Spain, which he had always wanted to visit and spend time in with his friends. Carlos Baker avers,

*For Whom the Bell Tolls* is a study of the betrayal of the Spanish people – both by what lay within them and what had been thrust upon them – and it is presented with that special combination of sympathetic involvement and hard – headed detachment which is the mark of the genuine artist... its partisanship in the case of democracy. (231)

The action takes place over the course of three days in the narrative. During this period, the novel's protagonist, Robert Jordan, acts and establishes himself. The people of Spain who are most impacted by the civil insurrection are the emotional and violent ones, and Hemingway portrays his rich experiences there. This work differs from the other two earlier war novels written by Hemingway in that he provides peeks into the past as well as the present roles of his characters.

Jordan is assisting Spain's citizens in their struggle against fascism. Hemingway selects a brief period of three days of intense combat to highlight the intensity with which everyone in Spain is involved, even though the Spanish Civil War is

a protracted conflict. The goal of transforming the Civil War's events into an artistic creation is to convey a message to society. the warning that anarchy will damage civilization and have an impact on people for many generations. Workplace discontent and strikes became regular occurrences. Every day, political killings started to occur on both sides. The administration was allegedly unable to put an end to the unrest and killings; as a result, the courts were prorogued and right-wing publications were suspended.

In this novel, every character has a deliberate obsession with bridges - either blowing them up or trying to save them. To salvage their movement, Republicans are determined to blow it apart while the Fascists will undoubtedly defend it. Jordan is given the task of blowing up the bridge, and to finish it, he looks to Pablo and those around him for assistance. Jordan knows that Pablo, Anselmo, Fernando, Primitivo, Eladio, Agustin, Andres, Pilar, and Maria will be behind him. Because of Rafael's demeanour, he feels a little uneasy and occasionally worries about Pablo. Since Jordan is portrayed as both a Spanish teacher and a lover of Spain, he is the focal point of all events in the novel. His mentality is so filled with patriotism that he intends to publish a novel on Spain once he is set free. According to him, fascism is the force that destroys both art and the artist. The sense of freedom enjoyed by artists has been negatively impacted by every global fascist movement. Hemingway's personal relationship with and sense of duty to defend the interests of the Spanish people -who are essentially people who value freedom - come from the collective consciousness of the Spanish people.

During World War I, Hemingway is eager to enlist in the Army. Although he was unable to enlist in the military, he was successful in landing a job as an ambulance driver and, by closely examining the events of the war, was able to develop his character. Jordan makes it quite evident that he does not identify with his nationality. He identifies with the task that has been given to him. He acknowledges the significance of the task given to him. His nationality and his dedication to his work do not conflict. The two work well together and have a noteworthy, significant effect that represents a unique combination. He refuses to give in to hopelessness. He is committed to destroying the bridge to fulfil his ideological goal of opposing the fascist. He volunteered to work under the communist leadership even though he is not a communist.

Examining Jordan as a remarkable representation of the Spanish Civil War can highlight the consequences of Hemingway's thoughtful decisions, highlighting the Republicans' goal of uniting under a structured leadership and the role of the Fascists, who were unable to survive. He is adamant that the establishment of the rule of law could only be accomplished by discipline and a disciplined force. The country would undoubtedly be destroyed by the anarchists, a group of ruthless rebels. When established governments and organised nations are unable to resolve their differences with their adversaries by peaceful means in their region, they turn to war, invoking the Geneva Convention in the process. Hemingway maintains the battle symbol's existence throughout the entire novel. Every character is a part of this conflict. His friends, who gather in secret in the Spanish mountain caves outside the city, offer their human expertise with plans to blow up the contentious bridge. The mountains and natural environs where he and his friends are found are a representation of nature, which is constantly at odds with the growth of science and technology, and the bridge is a steel cage representing the advancement of technology.

Their hopes were killed by the First World War, which had destroyed so much of life.

Jordan and Maria have a love story in the novel *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. He falls in love with her who was taken prisoner and sexually assaulted by the fascists. Maria has never experienced love before and asks the hero to show her how to feel it. She is utterly devoted to him, lives solely for his benefit, and longs to know his desires to fulfil them. She lives under his shadow, fusing her identities. She has the same dedication to the Civil War's cause. She witnessed her father, the village mayor, being shot to death by fascists, which is why she has such strong Republican convictions and is an outspoken opponent of fascism. In the Valladolid prison, she is subjected to torture by the fascists, who also shaved her hair. She is referred to as "little cropped head" all the time. Maria's hair symbolises her loss of a typical womanhood or girlhood, and its steady growth represents her gradual return to equilibrium and health.

Hemingway believed dishonest politicians were ultimately to blame for war. His sentiments against these politicians are evident in several of his writings. He had a deep understanding of organised violence and war, but it is noteworthy - and perhaps contradictory in the context of religion - because organised violence is the antithesis of all that is Christian. However, he never said that Christians should abstain from fighting in battles of this nature or that war, in the sense that he described it, is wholly unchristian.

Hemingway avoided delving into the ethics of war or how it relates to Christianity. The Spaniards are pious Christians who have a strong sense of national pride and have kept all moral principles to preserve their unique identity as a distinct European race. They enjoyed wild bullfights and consumed alcohol. Bull fighting is their favourite sport and hobby, which encourages gambling, which is detrimental to Spain's youth in the wake of World War II. This clash of ideals and contradiction in beliefs that fuelled the Civil War is what caused the discontent and strife between the fascists on one side and those who sought a republic on the other.

Other symbols and images seen in *For Whom the Bell Tolls* include the word Nada and the image of an aroma. The smells of various herbs, fine needles, the mob, vomit, spilled wine, roots, earth, the cave, death, leggings, shirts, horses, and other animals are among the recurring images that Hemingway depicts with such precision and skill that the reader can

almost smell the scents, which serve as symbols conveying a powerful appeal. In all of Hemingway's writings, death is the primary symbol and the main characters' thoughts are consumed by talk about death.

Jordan is certain that death is inevitable even though he does not believe in superstition or the supernatural. The traditional Spanish community is portrayed by Hemingway as one that believes in soothsayers, ogres, and other supernatural beings. Although he does not believe in such superstitious symbols, they are symptomatic of traditionalism. According to him, superstition is the result of both fear and imagination. He goes on to claim that divination is the source of imagination. Here, Hemingway highlights the tension that exists between tradition and non-tradition.

Jordan rejects the beliefs of the Spanish people in addition to becoming an American citizen. The sub-conscious of any civilization, community, or religion is greatly influenced by the myth and legend that exists there. For the entire Christian community in Spain, the Christian myth of divination and the Christian symbol of Christ's final sacrifice are potent emblems of their faith. It is clear from Hemingway's explanation of death in *For Whom the Bell Tolls* that death smells just like birth. "But when he fought at Talavera, he, who is not a gipsy, smelled death on Joselito" (262). Nevertheless, I fail to see how he could detect it over the scent of mamzanilla.

The ability of the Spanish people to smell death gives death in this novel a new metaphorical meaning. This aspect of the stench of death is absent from Hemingway's other novels. One classic sign that a guy is about to die is the stench of death. Even if Jordan does not hold this idea, there is no Christian impediment to this belief. Because everyone fighting for their rights on both sides is certain to die, death becomes a very important symbol in *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. Although they are aware of the consequences of dying, they are content to go in the direction of death as they are fighting for Spain, a just cause. Since the result is known, Jordan's companions are confident that when they accept death for the cause they are fighting for, they will do so with God's grace and enter His glorious dwelling. They are certain of God's unity. Another explanation offered by Christian theologies for the evils in the world, particularly the brutal deaths in wars and civil wars, is that the killing or dying of humans in combat is the symbolic purpose of the creator.

Maria's loss of virginity serves as a metaphor for losing one's dignity. She is forcibly stripped of her virginity. The fascists who killed her father have mercilessly raped her. Any woman would find it disgusting and sad when a guy uses violence against her for violating her right to modesty. Every woman has a right to maintain her modesty about her sexuality. In a married relationship or even outside of it, she has the right to have sex only with the guy of her choosing. It is entirely up to her to decide when and where she wants to have her sexual invasion. Even if every civilised society has laws protecting women's rights and their preservation, the breakdown of tradition and the old value system has made the law's failure and the ensuing punitive action against men uncommon. Maria claims that the fascists repeatedly raped her under appalling conditions, and this is symbolic. The rape of Republicans by Fascists is a demonstration of how they oppress women. Maria's skull was shaved and she was subjected to an intense and repeated rape in order to convey to everyone who opposes the fascists - especially women - that this is their fate. In any social upheaval, rape, torture, and the use of force are powerful symbols that dominate the thoughts of timid women.

People no longer trust the system and have lost faith in it. In *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, the people's emotional turmoil against the government is represented by a new banner that challenges the status quo. Every scientific advancement meant to improve humankind's lot in life eventually turns into menacing representations of devastation and catastrophe. In this novel, Hemingway portrays alcohol as a symbol of strength and solidarity, just like he does with prayers and catchphrases. Anselmo, an elderly farmer who joined the Republican Party, has become synchronized with all facets of the movement, and has developed the habit of drinking alcohol whenever he is having a serious conversation about an action that needs to be done or a counteraction that needs to be launched. Alcoholism is a metaphorical condition that indicates how alcohol use affects the human spirit.

Hemingway often uses earthy, natural language while describing Maria, implying that she stands in for Jordan's attraction to the natural world. Hemingway uses earth tones to depict Maria throughout the entire novel. Her hair is described as 'the golden brown of a grain field', her breasts are like 'little hills', and her belly button resembles a 'well on a plain' (145). These pictures show how Maria has a deep, natural connection to the planet. Yes, Jordan feels as though the ground moves during his intercourse with Maria. He is in communion with Spain, his beloved nation, and Maria. Maria becomes a sign of fertility, while Jordan becomes a symbol of love. His relationship with Maria is a metaphor for his instinctive rather than rational union with Spain. At the start of the novel, Jordan serves as the face of the Republican movement in Spain, but by the end, it has undergone a metamorphosis and is in a complete union. A voyage is represented by the Spanish movement. Pablo represents Judas Iscariot's treachery during the final hours of Jesus' life. However, Hemingway now assumes a different character when Pablo goes back to the rebel base. His abandonment and subsequent return serve as a metaphor for the volatility that befalls the Republicans.

Hemingway takes aim at the Republican leadership in the chapter that takes place at the Hotel Gaylord, arguing that their ineptitude, indifference, and factionalism are largely to blame for the party's downfall. Their leadership gap is a metaphor for the cause's impending doom. The responsible leaders are unable of making the correct choice, which at times renders the movement directionless and opens the door to disaster. By the novel's conclusion, Hemingway presents Jordan as a capable commander under trying conditions. He turns into a representation of perseverance - what Hemingway himself referred to as "grace under pressure." This is the one place where Jordan best exemplifies the virtue of the code hero.

With Pablo gone and the explosives taken, he must control his rage to use it to solve the new, more challenging task of demolishing the bridge with fewer personnel and fewer explosives. A symbolic leader with excellent leadership traits is Jordan. Instead of dwelling on the past or worrying about the future, he focuses on the here and now. He can thoroughly enjoy the sensual experiences that fate has given him, such as the taste of absinthe, the scent of pine trees, and having sex with Maria, because he is focused on the here and now. The real enemy of the code hero is death, which it also makes him fearful of. In the end, the only thing keeping the guerrilleros together in the face of overwhelming odds is Jordan's composure.

The climax of novel is revealed in the final chapter, where Jordan scents the pine trees, watches the sunrise, and notices a squirrel. From his prior assessment of the area, he recognises one of the sentries on the bridge. The bombing signals the start of the bridge explosion. After shooting the two sentries on the bridge, Jordan and Anselmo attach the dynamite to the back of the structure. Pilar and her group return just as Jordan is about to attach the dynamite to the far end. Fernando has been mortally wounded, while Eladio has been shot through the skull. Primitivo and Rafael leave Fernando by the bridge with a weapon at his request.

Hemingway portrays Pilar as the embodiment of mystery and superstition and Jordan as the embodiment of rationality. In the end, Jordan concedes that the world is more enigmatic than his logical deductions. Jordan also represents the conflict between duty and emotion. His goal to blow up the bridge is more important to him. It seems that Maria and Pilar are connected intuitively. Jordan is a metaphor for the masculine realm in which men rely more on their heads than their hearts. They represent intelligence, and women stand for sentiment, emotion, and intuition, all of which influence how they behave. He is portrayed as a fully "integrated person" by the novel's end. The real battle is not between man and nature, but rather between man and himself, as Hemingway expresses in *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. The Spanish are fun-loving, sentimental, and confined to their own territory. When their society is split along ideological lines, they are destroyed.

Novelists such as Ernest Hemingway took up the issues posed by the symbolic declaration of the people's rights and used them as inspiration for their writing. Hemingway is concerned in getting society to reflect by skilfully using the platform of fiction, even though he hasn't explicitly declared that he wants to write stories that will be read by future generations and used as a guide for better living. It does not matter how flexible fiction is in representing people's ideas and thoughts in the defence of their rights, whether those people are in Spain or anywhere else in the globe. Many nations that are now in crisis are reenacting the Spanish Civil War to establish peaceful governance with the aid of international organisations. Hemingway's microcosmic painting perfectly encapsulates the era's spirit, yet the lesson is universal.

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