

# A Study of Community Writing in *For Whom the Bell Tolls*

Shulan Li

Sichuan International Studies University, China

## Abstract

**As one of Ernest Hemingway's masterpieces, *For Whom the Bell Tolls* is set at the time of Spanish people's anti-fascist war. Although the Spanish people are faced with the crisis of community by blood, community of place and community of spirit under the devastation of the war, they do not give up their pursuit of life and actively build close relationships with their comrades and people around them, revealing Hemingway's criticism and reflection on the war and his humanitarian concern**

## Keywords

**Ernest Hemingway, *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, community.**

## 1. Introduction

Ernest Hemingway, an American writer and journalist, is considered one of the most famous novelists of the 20th century. Throughout his life, Hemingway received numerous honors, including the Pulitzer Prize and the Nobel Prize in literature. American writers belonging to the "lost generation" are typified by Ernest Hemingway. He usually expresses uncertainty and bewilderment about life, the outside world, and society in his works. In the literary community, he has long been regarded as a tough guy; he is the nation's spiritual icon. Hemingway's writings are a significant part of American and even global literary history, and they also signal the beginning of his distinctive style.

*For Whom the Bell Tolls* published in 1940 and translated into many other languages holds an important place in Hemingway's artistic career and receives a great deal of praise. Hemingway gained great fame for this novel. The novel tells the story of young American Robert Jordan, who volunteers to join the Spanish government army in order to bomb a bridge that may serve as a passageway for rebel support troops. With the help of the guerrillas, he carries out an important demolition mission. The fact that Jordan is always aware of being a foreigner emphasizes his isolation[1]. However, in the process of practicing the task, Jordan and his comrades gain warmth and redemption and rebuild the communities because of the love and care for each other. Jordan experiences the conflict of love and duty, the test of life and death, and finally dies in the evacuation from the bomb task, sacrificing his young life for the Spanish people. Hemingway once told a fellow journalist that he "loved the volunteers" because courage was "visible to the eyes," and he was impressed by an American student who told him, two days before being killed, "there is nothing as shitty as war"[2]. The Spanish Civil War, from early autumn 1936 to spring 1939, was the first battle between the progressive forces of the world and the fascist regime in Germany. Due to a variety of complex historical reasons, the progressive forces failed in this struggle. At that time, numerous internationalist fighters from all over the world went to the Spanish front and strongly supported the Spanish people in their struggle against fascism. As a war correspondent, Hemingway witnessed this feat and wrote *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. Hemingway said of *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, "It was not just the Civil War I put into it. It was everything. I had learned about Spain for eighteen years"[3]. Through this novel, Hemingway explores the profound issues of life and death, personal happiness and human destiny, and shows unique artistic characteristics and humanitarian spirit.

Most of Hemingway's works are full of individualism and loneliness, but *For Whom the Bell Tolls* is different from Hemingway's previous works in that this novel is full of human feelings, care and warmth. The novel presents multiple types of community. In his work *Community and Civil Society*, Ferdinand Tönnies defines community precisely. According to Tönnies, Community means genuine, enduring life together. Thus, it must be understood as a living organism in its own right[4]. And it is based on the idea that in the original or natural state there is a complete unity of human wills[4]. He further mentions that community can be divided into three types, namely community by blood, community of place and community of spirit that relate to kinship, neighborhood and friendship respectively.

## 2. The Crisis and Reconstruction of Community by Blood

In the novel, before the Spanish Civil War, the members of the guerrillas all have a complete and perfect family. Just as Tönnies believes that the relationship and participation are related to the community by blood. The home is both the physical location and, so to speak, the living body of kinship. Here people live together under the one protecting roof. Here they share the same possessions and enjoy the same good things, especially nourishment from the same supplies and sitting together at the same table[4]. However, because of the war, many people are killed and the original community by blood is also broken. In the novel, the old man Anselmo says that "I had a house, and now I have no house. There were the hides of wolves I had shoot" [5]. Joaquín recounts the murder of his entire family by the fascists. He recalls that when the fascists purify the town, they first shoot his father and mother because they both support Socialist. Then they shoot his sister's husband because he is a union member, and kill another sister because she refuses to reveal the whereabouts of her husband that joined the guerrilla forces. Besides, Maria's parents are also killed by the fascists, and Maria herself is tortured and raped by them, which leaves an indelible trauma on her. Cathy Caruth mentions that trauma seems to be much more than a pathology, or the simple illness of a wounded psyche: it is always the story of a wound that cries out[6]. The rape of Maria by the fascists not only leaves her with physical scars, but also leaves her with mental trauma. For a long time, she does not dare to communicate with people, which also affects her romantic relationship with Jordan. From the inner monologue of Andrés, we can also see the destruction of the war on the family community: "But you have no house and no courtyard to your no-house, he thought. You have no family but a brother who goes to battle tomorrow and you own nothing but the wind and the sun and an empty belly" [5]. It can be seen that the characters in the novel all lose their relatives and become homeless due to the war that is more or less traumatic to the characters and also destroys the original community by blood.

Tönnies argues preparing meals with drinks plays an insignificant role in family community. The stove and the exuberant fire are the essence and heart of the home, so the stove and the table are symbolically important because the table has the function of renewing the body and soul of its members. In the novel, the guerrillas eat and drink at the same table in a cave and everyone has a place at the table and a share of the meal. Sometimes the members have to work apart for the necessary tasks, and they are reunited at the table for the necessary pleasures of distribution. To a certain extent, the table renews their bodies and refreshes their souls and the cave is their house. There are also many shared tools and furniture in the cave such as rawhide-covered stools, cups, platter, kettle, hearth, enameled-ware bowls, dishes, ax, cape, blanket that the guerrillas possess and share under the cave which protect them.

In addition, Tönnies believes that in any kind of community life there exists and forms a different distribution of labor. According to the difference of gender, the difference of natural forces is more expressed in the division of labor: In defense of their common property it falls to the wife to take charge of valued possessions and to the man to ward off enemy attacks. His job

is to hunt for food, hers to preserve and prepare it. The wife's energy will be directed to domestic life and the female children[4]. This division of labor also exists in the novel. Female members take on the easy and less dangerous tasks. Pilar is responsible for cooking for the members of the community, and in most cases, Maria who can cook a little works as Pilar's assistant, cleaning dishes and keeping the things of the cave in order. And Pilar is also in charge of the demolition equipment Jordan brings with him. However, the male members take on more dangerous and harder labor. They are usually responsible for patrolling outside the cave to prevent enemy's attacks and protect the safety of members. For instance, Jordan and other male members that go out on patrol find the tracks of the enemy and fight with the enemy. In addition, they are also responsible for hunting, providing a source of food for the members, such as Rafael who go out to catch two rabbits at night.

In the novel, the members care about each other and already consider each other as family in their hearts. It is among brothers and sisters, as Tönnies argues, that they are most dependent on common activities, and that they present the purest display of true help and mutual support. In the novel, Jordan regards their life in the cave as "normal family life", pondering that "Agustín, with his vile mouth, is my brother, and I never had a brother. Maria is my true love and my wife. I never had a true love. I never had a wife. She is also my sister, and I never had a sister, and my daughter, and I never will have a daughter. I hate to leave thing that is so good" [5]. As Joaquín sadly recalls the brutal murder of his families, Maria puts her arms around his neck and kisses him, saying that "I kiss thee as a brother. I am thy sister. And I love thee and thou have a family. We are all thy family" [5]. Besides, Primitivo and Pilar address Maria as daughter in the novel. It can be seen that in the harsh living environment, guerrillas love and take care of each other, regarding each other as brothers and sisters. Although the original community by blood is destroyed by the war, they also get warmth from mutual support and rebuild a new community.

### 3. The Construction and Deconstruction of the Community of Place

Community of place is directly manifested as living together. It is based on the possession of the land, and the neighborhood is the universal characteristic of living together in the village, where the close habitation, the common fields of the village give rise to countless contacts, mutual habitations and familiarity. The community may be maintained even if it no longer exists. Moreover, there is a great need for certain habits and customs to keep the king of community. In the novel, the guerrillas headed by Pablo and those headed by El Sordo all live in the same mountain area, and the caves they live in are very close to each other, so they share the mountain area and the food on it, and they help each other to resist the enemy, establishing a deep community of place. Usually, the two teams meet every week at night to discuss the situation of war, which gradually forms a habit and ritual, and the two teams of guerrillas meet each other and become familiar with each other, maintaining a good neighborly relationship.

Guerrillas from the two teams often meet and care for each other. Living in the mountains with very little material, El Sordo offers his scarce wine to Jordan the first time they meet and when he goes to look for the horses, he leaves wine in the cave for Jordan. Joaquín and Maria have also developed a strong bond, and they consider each other their own family. After the guerrillas blow up the train, Joaquín carries Maria forward, risking his own life to save her. In addition, the life of the community is mutual possession and enjoyment, and the will to possess and enjoy is the will to protect and defend, while the evil and the enemy are the object of the community's desire to destroy. In the novel, the two groups of guerrillas cooperate with each other and help each other to fight against the fascists. In order to successfully complete the task of blowing up the bridge and successfully evacuate, Jordan asks El Sordo to look for and steal the horses for them which is very dangerous and deadly in that they will surely die if found by the enemy. In this case, he does not hesitate to agree, regardless of personal life and death, and

do his best to help the neighborhood complete the task of blowing up the bridge. However, on the very day they go to steal the horse, it suddenly begins to snow, which is very dangerous for them, because the enemy may follow the horse's hoof-prints to find their tracks. Jordan and others in the cave are also worried about them. Unfortunately, they are eventually discovered and surrounded by the enemy. In order to protect their teammates, and let Jordan successfully complete the task of blowing up the bridge, they never surrender and fight with the enemy bravely, paying the price of their lives. At the time of their siege, Agustín and Primitivo are determined to save the El Sordo's, but Pilar stops them for the sake of the overall situation. Primitivo is very sad, and weeps for them, saying that they are his good comrades, and the old man Anselmo says that he must avenge them.

It can be seen that the two teams of guerrillas that are linked to one another closely are willing to sacrifice their lives for each other. Although they are located in the harsh environment of the mountains and lead a hard life, they can unselfishly share living materials that they have, pleasure and pain, honor and shame, thus building a community of place with selfless dedication.

This community of place also declines due to the cruel war. First of all, the community is destroyed to a certain extent with the killing of the guerrilla group in which El Sordo is located. Secondly, as the task of bombing the bridge approaches, the guerrillas evacuate the mountains and flee to other places, and Jordan also sacrifices his life in the evacuation process. So far, the community of place established in the mountain collapses, but the spirit of community will never die.

#### **4. The Clashes and Pursuit of Community of Spirit**

Tönnies believes that the community of spirit acts as an interaction and support in the same direction. It can be understood as the interrelations of the life of the mind, and therefore it can be also understood as the highest form of community, with the community being related to sacred places or gods worshipped. The novel mentions in Spain blasphemy keeps pace with the austerity of religion. The people had grown away from the Church because the Church was in the government and the government had always been rotten. This was the only country that the reformation never reached. They were paying for the Inquisition now, all right[5]. In the novel, people's religious beliefs diverge and clash; the Catholic Church and the government conspire to kill people, so people gradually alienate from the church. In the novel, Pilar says "before we had religion and other nonsense"[5]. "There probably still is God after all, although we have abolished Him"[5]. It is repeated many times in the novel that the old man Anselmo does not like killing, and he considers killing to be a sin. The old man also expresses his disappointment in religion and antipathy to war: "Since we do not have God here any more, neither His Son nor the Holy Ghost, who forgives? I do not know. But with or without God, I think it is a sin to kill. To take the life of another is to me very grave"[5]. The rebels, led by Franco of Spain, are Catholic, while the Spaniards believe in the Republic, and it is this difference in faith that causes the guerrillas and their families to be killed by the fascists.

There are inevitably conflicts in the communal life of guerrilla groups. Tönnies argues that in a spiritual community, constant contact and mutual support also mean mutual obstruction and negation, and as long as the former prevails, this relationship can be said to be a real community, which must be balanced from a high degree of individual freedom. In the novel, Pablo in old days fights very bravely, and everyone admires him. However, the guerrillas led by Pablo have been stationed in this mountain area for a long time without being discovered by the enemy, and he is gradually satisfied with the status quo, so the idea of anti-fascist is gradually slackened. when Robert Jordan arrives in the mountain, Pablo is already a depressed and hopeless man with several horses. Pablo instinctively knows that this of the bridge is ill-fated[7]. After

learning of Jordan's intentions, he firmly opposes and refuses the mission to blow up the bridge, believing that it will disrupt the long quiet life and bring danger to the mountains and the guerrillas, but other members support Jordan's mission. After an argument, Pablo angrily leaves from the cave. In order not to let him sabotage the mission, the members discuss whether to kill him or not. However, after a while, he returns to the cave and declares himself willing to support the bridge bombing mission. Shockingly, just as Jordan is about to carry out the bombing mission, Pablo suddenly steals the explosive device and threw it away, so it can be seen that between the interests of the individual and the community, Pablo chooses the former. After Pablo loses the equipment of Jordan and run away from home, he feels an unprecedented loneliness and sadness. He recalls the happy life with guerrillas, and he finally realizes that he cannot be separated from the life of the community, longing to return to his group. He is very ashamed of what he has done, so he goes back to the cave and formally apologizes to everyone, hoping to participate in the battle with everyone. And he also brings five members of the other guerrillas. Jordan therefore changes his sorrow into joy in that with the help of Pablo it is more likely to succeed in the mission to blow up the bridge. Everyone also accepts the apology of Pablo regardless of the past and they are united in the battle. Therefore, it can be seen that Pablo returns to the embrace of community in the end.

Friendship is related to the community of spirit, and, like those who share the same interests in art, those who know each other are in fact friends in faith. They are bound everywhere by a spiritual tie, working for a common cause and career. In the war against fascism, all have a common conviction that their goal is to destroy the fascists, and all have contributed to it. In the novel, the old man Anselmo's belief in anti-fascism has never wavered. When Pablo wants to destroy the mission, he accuses his selfish and coward behavior; he resolutely follows Jordan's arrangement to observe the road conditions. Even if it snows heavily, he insists his position until late at night. To a certain extent, it can be said that the loyal old man reassures Jordan in the war. Besides, Jordan is forced to use a grenade to destroy the explosives since Pablo's destruction prevents him from using the detonator. Finally, with the help of the old man, Jordan successfully completes the explosion. As a result, the old man who is sixty-eight years old is killed by a close explosion, devoting to the Republic and pays his life for the revolutionary cause. Pilar is one of the few female characters in the novel, and she is more determined and courageous than Pablo. Before the fascists are driven out of the mountains, Pilar, the wife of the original guerrilla leader Pablo, leads the mountain rebels. She assaults the militia alongside Pablo in the early days of the Spanish Civil War and then retires into the mountains to fight with the guerrillas. When she hears about the mission of blowing up the bridge, she agrees without hesitation, and also persuades Pablo to join the mission, because she knows Pablo is a smart and resourceful man. Even though Pilar knows that Jordan and others will die in the bridge bombing, she does everything she can to help Jordan complete his mission and does her best for the Republic. On the eve of the task of blowing up the bridge, Andrés takes the initiative to complete the task of delivering a letter, which is very dangerous and needs to cross many enemy-occupied areas. In the process of delivering the letter, he also meets a lot of difficulties; he is regarded as the enemy and is almost shot, but he never thinks of giving up and finally successfully sends the letter to the officer Golz. American Spanish teacher Robert Jordan dedicates his life to advancing republican ideals after being inspired by his grandfather. He is studying in Spain when the Spanish Civil War breaks out, so he quickly chooses the Spanish Republic and takes part in the fight against fascism. He is told to go behind enemy lines and blow up a bridge during a Republican offensive. And he believes that the bombing of the bridge is a turning point in the future of mankind. In order to complete the task of bombing the bridge, he risks his life. Although he knows that the task of bombing the bridge is impossible, he still firmly believes in his original intention and belief. During the three days in the mountains, he falls in love with the girl Maria who loves him as well in the war. He fantasizes about the post-

war life with her for several times. Although he struggles with his thoughts repeatedly during the process; he thinks about the meaning of the war; he doubts the task of bombing the bridge; he is afraid of losing Maria; he wants to escape this place with her. In the end, his collective interests overcome his personal interests, abandoning his own happiness and future and sacrificing his own life for the happiness of the whole world. In addition to guerrillas, people from all over the world including many gypsies and unknown foreign friends also participate in the war against fascism.

## 5. Conclusion

The title of the novel is taken from a passage by John Donne: "No man is an island; Every man is a piece of the continent"[5]. As reflected in the novel, Hemingway believes that any death is a loss to humanity because we are all members of the human race. And do not ask for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for everyone. The characters in the novel embody this kind of community spirit. Under the threat of war, the guerrilla members all lose their relatives and the original family community is destroyed, but the characters gain warmth again through mutual care and love, and rebuild the community of blood. In addition, the two guerrilla teams live in the same mountain area, they meet each other, share materials, form a good neighborhood relationship. In order to help Jordan complete the task, the whole guerrilla led by El Sordo sacrifice their lives, building a kind of community of place. Furthermore, the guerrillas in the novel have a common goal and belief, that is, to fight for the cause of the republic for life; they support each other at the cost of their own lives, and thus jointly build a community of spirit. In the novel, the characters overcome the fear of war and put collective interests first beyond their personal interests, truly establishing a community with dedication and practical actions and obtaining warmth and redemption. To a certain extent, the novel transcends regional restrictions and has universal significance.

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