



## INVOLVEMENT IN 'WAR' BIDDING FAREWELL TO 'LOVE' AS PICTURED IN THE FIFTH COLUMN: A BRIEF NOTE

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Ernest Hemingway, a colossus in the twentieth century literature, is considered as one of the most famous American writers winning great recognition and reputation from literary circles as remarkable short-story writer, novelist and playwright, all rolled into one. As a short story writer, he has to his credit publication of such popular short stories as "The Undeclared War", "The Well Lighted Place" and "The Snows of Kilimanjaro". As a dramatist, he has asserted his claim with his only full length play *The Fifth Column*. As a novelist, he has to his credit publication of such remarkable novels as *The Sun Also Rises* (1927), *A Farewell to Arms* (1929) *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1940) and *The Old Man and the Sea* (1952). Hemingway's fiction served "as an area in which he worked out his anxieties..." (Fellner 85).

Hemingway's first experiment rested with the short story form. Shifting of genre was gradual from short story to novel, from novel to drama and back to fiction. His works, generally speaking, due to his affiliations with the writers of the "Lost generation", do reveal a sense of disenchantment, alienation, deprivation and revulsion from the horrors of war. War, wound, violence and death are his recurrent themes. Besides, he has written a lot about bull fighting, sex, fishing and hunting, the manly pursuits in life. In the words of Joseph Waldmeir who rightly remarks:

"War, the prizing, fishing, hunting and making love are some of the celebrations by means of which Hemingway's religio-philosophy of man is conveyed" (P 165).

At his stage, a brief biographical sketch of Hemingway is essential, for he has derived most of his raw material for his works from his personal experiences. Hemingway was born on 21 July 1899 in Oak Park, Illinois. His father was a doctor devoted to hunting and fishing His mother was a religious with a taste for music. As a boy, he learned boxing and played football rather interestingly during his high school studies. He composed light verse, wrote a good many columns and tried his hand at a few short stories. Later he turned his hand to more serious fiction. He got into the war as honorary Lieutenant in the end cross. He went overseas as an ambulance driver. He was severely wounded while passing out chocolates to the troops in Italy at Fossalta di Plave on 8 July 1918. An Italian standing a few feet away had both legs blown off. Hemingway witnessed such scenes of horror on the battlefield. After the war, Hemingway worked for a while in Canada for the *Toronto Star*. He settled down in Paris and under the guidance of Ezra Pound, Bishop and Gertrude Stein, he became a writer.

The minority fashion of the late twenties became the majority fashion of the early thirties. Some of the artists suffered for remaining true to their aesthetic convictions. According to Carlos Basker, "Writers began to be judged according to a politico-economic scale of values" (P 202). In 1937, Hemingway had come close to embracing the society he had deserted some twenty years before. He was back in another "war for democracy". Hemingway had followed political developments in Spain from the beginning of his career. He had no party affiliations but a deep interest in and love for the Republic. Politically he was on the side of the Republic. He tried to write truly about the Spanish Civil War in 1936 in his play *The Fifth Column* which was completed in 1938.

Hemingway's works are either historical or autobiographical. *The Fifth Column* is a historical play set against the background of besieged Madrid. On the 5<sup>th</sup> of July, 1936, a Rising occurred throughout Spain among the officers of the Armed forces. The leader of the army. revolt was franco. Four columns marched on Madrid. The fifth columnists the traitors, attacked the defenders of the city from the rear. The Germans and Italians joined in on Franco's side. The Soviet Union was the only large European power to give military aid to the Republican Government in Spain. But the war ended in the unconditional defeat of the Republic on 31 March 1939. "A writer's job is to tell the truth" said Hemingway. He tried to tell the truth about his time, to correct the lies which former generations had rejected. He observes: "No history is written honestly. You have to keep in touch with it all the time, and you can depend on just as much as you have actually seen and followed" (Baker 198). He tried with all his energy to write truly about life, as Ce'zanne, an Expressionist had painted truly. The Spanish Civil war supplied him with the raw material for the play.

*The Fifth Column* is a three-act melodrama about counter espionage, love, and duty and Fascist atrocities in civil war in Spain. The main character, Philip Rawlings is a hard-drinking American who lives at the Hotel Floride and poses as journalist. He is really a loyalist counter espionage agent assigned to uncover fifth columnists. Revolted by the brutality of



SIM methods, Philip longs to escape from his work but he performs his duties and contributes measurably to the loyalties efforts. Along with fellow counterspy, Max, a selflessly dedicated German communist, he raids an enemy observation post. He captures both the Nazi General who directs rebel shellings of Madrid and a leader of Madrid's fifth column. As a result, the SIM rounds up 300 of the saboteurs.

Philip's conflict is aggravated by his association with Dorothy Bridges, a fastidious and egocentric correspondent for *Cosmopolitan* who also lives at the Hotel Florida. She deserts Preston, her 35 year old lover and American Journalist. She becomes intimate with Philip and tries to seduce him into home-life. Max persuades Philip to recommit himself to duty. He says: "You do it for all men. You do it for the children. And sometimes you do it even for dogs" (P 77). Ultimately, Philip assents to Max's arguments that counter espionage is important in the fight against despotism. Philip simultaneously suppresses his yearnings for a disengaged life and breaks off with Dorothy. He declares sweepingly, "We're in for forty years of undeclared wars and I've signed up for the duration" (P 89).

The Fifth Column highlights most of the techniques that are discernable in Hemingway's short stories and novels. Hemingway is the most formidable exponent of Eliot's technique of the objective correlative. The war scenes in *The Sun Also Rises* and *A Farewell to Arms* express the author's emotion which includes violence, deprivation, rape, hunger, death etc. the heroes of both novels like Philip in the play cannot sleep but when they sleep, nightmares haunt them. Hemingway recreates the gloom and tension of war time Madrid through sound effects, visual devices, and repetition of same sentence patterns. The play is punctuated by the off stage sounds of machine gun 'pop' sound, shelling, and the screams of wounded passers-by. The stage directions abound in words that imitate the noises of bombardment like "Whistling-rush" "crash", "whang" etc. visually life under siege is represented by the bright flash of exploding shells seen through a window and the sound of falling glass. The death of the electrician, a layman, and the comrade Wilkinson shocks the audience. A battle map on the wall of Dorothy's room and a war poster between Dorothy's room and Philip's room are there. And the hotel manager's hankering for food is a continual reminder of Madrid's deprivation. Philip Rawlings in *The Fifth Column* desires to have Homelife with Dorothy Bridges, bidding adieu to war. Love conquers him at night. In the day time, he is conscious of his duty. War deters him from leading a Home-life. He is reminded of his paramount duty by his German comrade, Max. When he is denied home-life, he experiences "nada". To combat nothingness, he sacrifices Venus on the altar of Mars and prefers his existentialistic choice, duty. Hemingway's new venture is his dramatic medium. His is a socially significant play. Lynton Hudson remarks: "He has fallen in line with his contemporary playwrights who tried to depict the futility of an amoral, hysterical society, putting up a pitiful pretence of gaiety" (P 67). He projects the inner workings of the mind, an expressionist method introduced by the great American playwright, Elmer Rice in his play *The Adding Machine* (1923) and it recalls Eugene O'Neill's psychoanalysis also.

Hemingway's break away from established method of procedure and accepted rules is evident in the play, *The Fifth Column*. Absence of didacticism, speech like dialogue instead of rhetoric as in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, revival of chorus in the form of communist anthems and symbolism are instances in point. Venus, the Roman goddess of sensual love and physical beauty, stands for love and Mars symbolizes duty when applied to a soldier. The conflict between love and duty had been Hemingway's favourite theme in his novels, *A Farewell to Arms* and *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. He has employed the same Venus-Mars conflict in the play *The Fifth Column* too.

Hemingway's opposed concepts of Home and Not-Home get reflected in his works Love has association with Home life and war with the Not-Home life. Hemingway delineates love in the play *The Fifth Column* in a way quite different from its treatment in the novel. Philip- Preston-Dorothy form a sort of love triangle. In the love race, Preston loses but Philip wins. But war seems to be his first love and he is torn between war and love. There are very many factors that attract the hero to both love and war. Philip is less serious about his love for Dorothy in the beginning. He makes fun of her for calling every one a darling. Soon he is found growing fond of her. Her physical beauty attracts Philip and he is enamored of her attractive figure. Philip opens his heart to her: "And you've got the loveliest damn body in the world. And I adore you, too" (P 66). Again, Philip praises Dorothy's beauty to the sky. He tells Antonio about her physical features: "And I'd like to marry her because she's got the longest, smoothest, straightest legs in the world" (P 45). He is crazy about Dorothy, as she is fair in complexion with beautiful hair.

Dorothy is not only charming and beautiful but also friendly, innocent and quite brave, this quality of which attracts Philip more. Being friendly with the counter spies, she is against Philip who reprimands Anita in the presence of others. Though the Moorish towards her. As she is innocent, she is frank and outspoken. She expresses neither horror nor anger nor fear when there is heavy shelling. As she is brave, she refers to the bombardment as nice. She is not chicken-hearted as she expresses no fear at all when Wilkinson is murdered. Dorothy's beauty and fortitude recalls Hemingway's Martha. Hemingway loved



Martha, a pretty sophisticated Bryn Mawr graduate when he met in Key West in Dec 1936. Martha shared not only Hemingway's professional and ideological involvement but much of his mundane life in Spain as well. They lived at Hotel Florida, often worked on their dispatches and generally socialized with the same people. Acquaintances in Madrid were struck by her casual elegance. Carlos Baker holds: "Hemingway himself was impressed by her pluck on their excursions to the front. He was particularly proud of the fortitude she showed during a rugged tour of the cold, mountainous Belchite sector in September 1937, just weeks before he wrote *The Fifth Column*" (Baker 319).

Another factor is Dorothy's tender care for Philip. Dorothy, who has been longing to see Philip, gets excited when she hears of his arrival at the hotel. She calls him a "Madrid play boy" and chides him for his aimlessness in life. She tells him as:

"You could do something serious and decent.  
You could do something brave and calm and  
Good. You know what will happen if you keep  
On just crawling around from bar to bar and  
Going with those dreadful people? You'll  
Be shot. A man was shot the other night in  
Chicote's. It was terrible" (P 27)

Dorothy takes much care of Philip's welfare. She advises him not to visit Chicote's bare hereafter. She fears that he will be shot. She appeals to him to stop absolutely the playboy business and to start doing something worth doing. She pleads with him to write novels and articles or books on politics or dialectics. Philip agrees to carry out her wishes released from her heart out of love for him.

Dorothy desires to have an intimate relationship with Philip by marriage. She dreams of marrying Philip and visiting Paris. She longs for a happy, quiet life at some places like Saint Tropez. She longs to have long walks, and go swimming and have children who can play in the Luxembourg and roll hoops and sail boats. It is Dorothy's wish that Philip should be within her fold. In Act II sc iii, she appeals to him to stay with Philip to war her. She tells him:

"You can drink right here or do anything you  
Want. I'll be gay and play the phonograph.  
I'll drink too, even if it gives me a head ache  
Afterwards. We'll get a lot of people in if  
You want a lot of people. It can be noisy  
And full of smoke, and everything you like.  
You can't have to go out, Philip" (P 60).

Like a devoted wife, Dorothy is prepared to sacrifice all her interests for him. In turn, he expresses his love for her and his permanent night fears. Dorothy, who is happy about his love for her, is anxious to know about his horrors too. As knowing is liking, Philip is drawn much more towards Dorothy. At the same time, there are equal and opposite forces that attract Philip to war.

Hemingway introduces tragic scenes of war-destruction of buildings, shelling, people running helter-skelter to change the hero's heart. He cannot tolerate the loss of lives and other consequences of war. His heart melts for the suffering humanity. He wants to do something for them. Like Hemingway in the Italian front, Philip involves himself in the war which he thinks is the only solution to save humanity. Hemingway's ideal was to fight fascism. This gets reflected in the hero of the play, Philip. He undergoes untold miseries with his comrade to catch fifth columnists. His is an ideological fight. Though the war is terrific, he has no other alternative but to render his service in the war to achieve his ideal.

As Hemingway's heroes have lofty aims, they take great risks to accomplish their tasks. Robert Jordan in *For Whom The Bell Tolls* dynamites a bridge. Santiago hooks the great marlin in the deep sea in *The Old Man and the Sea*. Philip Rawlings hunts down fifth columnists in *The Fifth Column*. So it is a foregone conclusion that they prefer not-home life to home-life. Bernard Oldsey observes: "Hemingway' heroes...are wounded, neurotic, insomniac and afraid of the dark" (P 52). In his not-home life, Philip experiences horrors or night fears. To escape horrors, he involves himself in the war which is an existential choice.

To make the war scenes more realistic, Hemingway has employed contrast, a characteristic of Expressionist art. Hemingway contrasts the pleasant music with the hateful bombardment at the end of Act I as ii. Philip and Dorothy enjoy the music of opus 33, N0-4 which is followed by the terrific shelling:



“There comes the heavy banjo whang of the guns firing from Garabitas Hills. It whistles in with a roar and bursts in the street outside the window, making a bright flash through the window” (P 17).

The fear stricken Dorothy holds on to Philip for safety. She cries: “Oh Darling, darling, darling” (P 17)). Hemingway superbly prepares the audience for the horrors of war. The wages of war is death. The counter spies and even innocent people are killed ruthlessly. A man who is squirting everyone with a flit gun gets killed which is terrible squirting everyone with a flit gun gets killed which is terrible to Dorothy. Wilkinson, a young comrade, is shot at later the electrician is hit . Petra reports that six men were killed. The passerby who has been gay just a little while ago is killed. His death moves Philip very much. Philip feels that it is “very depressing” for war separates Preston from his wife and children.

All these point to the fact that life is meaningless and death visits one at any time. Man is always conscious of death which causes despair. Philip experiences emptiness in life because his is the Not-home life. To combat despair and frustration, Philip, in **The Fifth Column** is involved in war. He fights for an ideal, to fight fascism and capture the fifth column people. This is his existential choice. Philip derives a kind of joy from his devotion to duty despite the fact that the ultimate consequence of war is death. Thus, love and war are the two things with which one can combat nothingness in life. Philip escapes night fears and his play-boy business comes to an end by his involvement in war.

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