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Allen Guttman

Mechanized Doom: Ernest Hemingway and the Spanish Civil War

THE SPANISH EARTH, a documentary film written in 1937 by Ernest Hemingway and directed by Joris Ivens, begins with the camera focused upon the soil itself. From the very beginning the film is an assertion of an intimate relationship between men and the land: "This Spanish earth is hard and dry and the faces of the men who work on [this] earth are hard and dry from the sun." The land must be defended, in the film as in reality, against an enemy armed with the most up-to-date mechanized equipment. The land is defended, and the film ends with the waters rushing through the newly constructed irrigation ditch and bringing life to the sun-baked soil. Floods of American aid never reached the Loyalists of Spain, but that is history's irony and not Hemingway's. *For Whom the Bell Tolls* begins and ends similarly—with the "pine-needled floor of the forest." The enemy possesses the weapons of a technological society and, in the eyes of the hero Robert Jordan, General Franco's Heinkels move like "mechanized doom." In both novel and film, there is a struggle between men and machines.

Considering the historical facts, it is not surprising that there should be this common element. When the Spanish army, backed by the hierarchy of the Catholic Church in Spain and by the funds of millionaire Juan March, revolted, on the night of July 17, 1936, the republican government of Spain was saved

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from immediate destruction by the action of poorly armed and often unarmed civilians. The Fascist government of Italy had dispatched aircraft to General Franco's insurgent forces before the revolt began, and German aircraft were used soon after to ferry Moroccan troops to the mainland. As German and Italian aid increased, it became obvious to military observers that mechanized weapons, especially tanks and airplanes, were playing a major if not a decisive role in the fighting. Military historians studied the Spanish war as a testing ground for the newest theories of mechanized warfare: General Duval wrote *Les Leçons de la Guerre d'Espagne*; Hoffman Nickerson commented upon the obsolescence of the unmechanized "mass armies" in *The Armed Horde*, and, most importantly, Basil Henry Liddell Hart, in a series of books and articles, analyzed the new importance of the *Blitzkrieg* and *Panzerdivision*. As documents captured after the fall of Hitler's Reich testify, Hermann Goering was particularly anxious to test his newly created *Luftwaffe*. Popular magazines, such as *Time* and *The Saturday Evening Post*, discussed Giulio Douhet's theory of methodical bombardment of civilian populations for the purpose of demoralization.

Since the London Non-Intervention Committee of 1936-1939 and the American embargo of 1937 were disastrously effective in reducing the imports of the republicans and quite ineffective in halting the flow of men and munitions to General Franco's increasingly Fascistic Burgos Government, the disparity in equipment continued and widened. It was, therefore, perfectly natural that bombing planes and armored tanks should become, in the writings of Loyalist-sympathizers, symbols for the enemy; the symbols corresponded to the historical situation. It was quite as natural that these pro-Loyalist writings should emphasize the plight of the badly armed or completely unarmed republicans, especially when these republicans were the peasants whose primitive conditions of life left them almost completely helpless when attacked by the mechanized weapons of a technological civilization. It is, therefore, not surprising that, in *The Spanish Earth* and in *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, a

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symbolic struggle between men and machines forms an important part of Ernest Hemingway's vision of reality, a vision which, in the complex way that art is related to the rest of human experience, is based upon the historical facts. I shall try to show, first, the degree to which Hemingway's interpretation of the fight against Fascism was dramatized, particularized, as the struggle of men against machines; and, second, to suggest one way in which this interpretation can be helpful in exploring the multifarious sources of the extraordinarily passionate concern which thousands of Americans felt for the fate of the Spanish Republic.

I

From his earliest stories, from the Nick Adams episodes of *In Our Time* to the fable of *The Old Man and the Sea*, Ernest Hemingway has dealt, among other things, with man in the natural landscape. Even within the general lostness of *The Sun Also Rises*, the characters find themselves briefly while fishing in Spain, near Pamplona. For Hemingway, Spain is an elemental symbiosis of man and nature. What are the rituals described in Hemingway's paean to bull-fighting, *Death in the Afternoon*, if not a stylized representation of man's organic relationship to nature? As if applying the old saw about Europe being cut off at the Pyrenees, Hemingway looks upon Africa and Spain as a unit. In *The Green Hills of Africa* the mechanized world enters to destroy the hitherto uncorrupted world of nature. The book opens with a hunt ruined by the passing of a truck. This is put into the simplest possible language: "The truck had spoiled it." Later, the theme is generalized:

A continent ages quickly once we come. The natives live in harmony with it. But the foreigner destroys. . . . A country wears out quickly unless man puts back into it all his residue and that of all his beasts. When he quits using beasts and uses machines, the earth defeats him quickly. The machine can't reproduce, nor does it fertilize the soil.

What Hemingway seemed to discover in the Spanish war was that the machine is not merely passively destructive and biologically sterile: the war proved that the machine can also

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become an agent of destruction. Thus, writing in the *New Republic* in May 1937, he said:

There is nothing so terrible and sinister as the track of a tank in action. The track of a tropical hurricane leaves a capricious swath of complete destruction, but the two parallel grooves the tank leaves in the red mud lead to scenes of planned death worse than any the hurricane leaves.

Before dramatizing in *For Whom the Bell Tolls* the conflict between the values associated with the natural landscape and the values associated with the machine, Hemingway wrote several short stories and also a play, all concerned with the Spanish Civil War. The stories, which appeared in *Esquire*, are set for the most part in Madrid. Hemingway himself feels that these stories are inferior in technique and has refused requests to reprint them. The play, *The Fifth Column*, is set in Madrid's Hotel Florida. It is a wooden play about a Vassar girl (with long legs) and a counterspy for the International Brigades. If the play has any enduring meaning, it is that Ernest Hemingway could not dramatize the Spanish war with these stick figures; the play violates its author's own often-repeated rule—the writer must always tell the truth as he sees it, and the truth for Ernest Hemingway was not to be seen in the Hotel Florida. It was not even in Madrid; it was closer to the peasants and the gypsies, closer to the earth, closer to the pine-needled floor of the forest.

The first thing one notices about *For Whom the Bell Tolls* is, naturally, the epigraph taken from a meditation by John Donne. Ordinarily, we remember best the lines which give the book its title: "And therefore never send to know for whom the *bell* tolls; it tolls for *thee*." Hemingway uses the epigraph as a statement of the theme of brotherhood, of human solidarity, of the involvement of all men in humanity itself. The statement, however, is not separable from the imagery of the passage:

No man is an *Iland* intire of it selfe; every man is a peece of the *Continent*, a part of the *maine*; if a *Clod* bee washed away by the *Sea*, *Europe* is the lesse. . . .

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The images of the earth, of islands, continents, the main, a clod, are not accidental and not unimportant. Nathaniel Hawthorne, in his story "Ethan Brand," described all men as linked in a "magnetic chain of humanity," and Herman Melville, in Chapter LXXII of *Moby-Dick*, used a rope tied between Queequeg and Ishmael to symbolize the "precise situation of every mortal that breathes," the "Siamese connexion with a plurality of other mortals." Hemingway's use of Donne's metaphor of the earth, rather than the more obvious metaphors of chain or rope, would be scant grounds on which to base a thesis if it were not for the accumulation of such seemingly trivial bits of evidence. Consider, for instance, two essays, both entitled "On the American Dead in Spain," in which Hemingway uses this same imagery:

This spring the dead will feel the earth beginning to live again. For our dead are a part of the earth of Spain now and the earth of Spain can never die.

The dead do not need to rise. They are a part of the earth now and the earth can never be conquered. For the earth endureth forever.

One need only finish the quotation, "And the sun also riseth," to feel the unity of Hemingway's best writing.

Robert Jordan, "a peece of the *Continent*, a part of the *maine*," does *not* join the International Brigades. Two British volunteers described fighting in the wreckage of Madrid's University City, beneath the busts of "Plato, Spinoza, Aristotle and Voltaire," and behind bullet-proof "barricades . . . of Indian metaphysics and early nineteenth-century German philosophy," but Robert Jordan joins a guerrilla band in the mountains—a band which fights on horseback, a band whose previous accomplishments include the destruction of a troop-train. Robert Jordan fights side by side with Anselmo, a man of natural wisdom. The two trust each other by instinct, but Pablo, the leader of the band, is suspicious and grants the American a tentative approval only after witnessing his knowledge of horses, the same horses which subsequently bring out what little humanity is left in Pablo. Later still, horses play a vital

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role in the climax of Chapter XXVI, in the terrifying conflict between El Sordo's band, sprawled behind the dead bodies of their mounts, and the Fascist patrol. El Sordo's men hold out until the dive bombers come. Then all is determined. On a hillside, where men are naturally accustomed to survey their dominions, the band is uncovered and helpless. They are all killed.

Those less grim sections of the novel, the episodes which concern the affair with Maria, have been condemned as extraneous, but, looking specifically at the theme of the earth and the machine, one notes that Maria, Roberto's beloved "rabbit," is somehow identified with the Spanish earth that was then being violated figuratively as Maria was violated literally. Maria's shaved head is so realistic a detail that one is surprised to see an obvious symbolism here as well. The *least* that one can say is that Maria's story parallels certain aspects of Spanish history. Paired with Maria is Pilar, a sort of Iberian Earth-Mother who is accustomed to having the world itself "move" during her love affairs, who had lived "nine years with three of the worst paid matadors in the world," and who reminds us again and again of the love-making and bull-fighting that, for Hemingway, represent Spain as it should have been.

In symbolic opposition to the cluster of values represented by the two bands, their mounts, and the earth itself, we have the steel bridge. Just as the lighthouse dominates Virginia Woolf's novel, so the bridge controls and unifies the action of *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. In one sense it is the center of a series of concentric circles; in another it is the point towards which the elements of the action converge. No matter what geometric metaphor is used to plot the book upon a plane surface, it is certain that the bridge is central. "That bridge," thinks Robert Jordan, "can be the point on which the future of the human race can turn." The character of each person is determined by his or her relation to the bridge. The steel bridge is the emblem of the technological society and at the same time the path over which the *Panzerdivision* of the enemy will come. Pablo is, of course, against the demolition of the

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bridge. Pilar is for it, because she understands its significance: "I am for the Republic. . . . And the Republic is the bridge." Robert Jordan defines himself by the bridge: "You're a bridge-blower now. Not a thinker." At the end, he once more identifies himself with the bridge: "As Jordan goes, so goes the bloody bridge. . . ." The bridge *is* destroyed, but Robert Jordan, escaping on horseback, is hit by a shell fired from an enemy tank and mortally wounded.

One need not, moreover, rely exclusively upon the action of the novel or upon the symbolic oppositions, for the characters speak out. Anselmo asserts bitterly, "We must take away their planes, their automatic weapons, their tanks, their artillery, and teach them dignity." And Pilar is completely explicit: "The sight of those machines does things to me. We are nothing against such machines." Looking up at the Heinkels overhead, Robert Jordan thinks they are like "sharp-nosed sharks of the Gulf Stream," but only for a moment does he link the machine with the natural menace. As the tank was, in the dispatches which appeared in the *New Republic*, worse than the hurricane, so the bombers are worse than the very worst of nature.

But these, wide-finned in silver, roaring, the light mist of their propellers in the sun, these do not move like sharks. They move like no thing there has ever been. They move like mechanized doom.

Clearly then, for Hemingway the Spanish Civil War was dramatized as, among other things, a struggle waged by men close to the earth and to the values of a primitive society against men who had turned away from the earth, men who had turned to the machine and to the values of an aggressive and destructive mechanical order. When Hemingway addressed the American Writers' Congress in 1937, he spoke of Spain and of the writer's responsibility to "write truly and having found what is true, to project it in such a way that it becomes a part of the experience of the person who reads it." Considering the facts both of Spanish history and of Hemingway's own career prior to 1936, *For Whom the Bell Tolls* seems the natural result of Hemingway's determination to write as truly as he could.

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II

Early in the course of the Spanish war, the *New Republic*, which had printed Hemingway's dispatches from Spain, presented in an editorial the image of the machine-as-menace.

Women and children torn to pieces by aerial bombs as they go to market, crowded building and boulevards . . . shattered by artillery, suburbs and outlying parks made into playgrounds for grinding tanks, men and women . . . sprayed to death . . . by machine guns in power-diving pursuit-planes—this is Madrid today.

There is no sense of human agency behind the weapons of the Fascists; there is only the sense of impotent humanity beneath omnipotent machines. This sense of impotence and this image of a conflict between men and machines runs through a variety of writings and is found in the visual arts as well. It is well, for the sake of clarity, to concentrate upon the most nearly ubiquitous symbol of technological warfare—the airplane.

Herbert Matthews, of the *New York Times*, described his own feelings of powerlessness before the then-experimental *Luftwaffe*: "It is a terrible moment when one can hear a bomber directly overhead, knowing its power of destruction and feeling so helpless." Irving Pflaum, of the *United Press*, admitted that his "one real fear" was "that methodical, systematic, terroristic bombing . . . may be one of the decisive factors in future wars. With me it was decisive. It licked me." Anna Louise Strong pictured Spain's "green civilian volunteers . . . raked by machine-gunning from the air. . . ." It was a form of attack "against which they were helpless." Similar observations were made by Edwin Rolfe in his history of the Abraham Lincoln Battalion, by Erskine Caldwell in his contribution to *Salud!* (a small anthology of writings on Spain), by Waldo Frank, who asked his readers to visualize "tens of thousands of bare breasts of simple men and women . . . there to confront the machine guns and bombing planes. . . ."*

As this comment of Waldo Frank's suggests, the bombing

* Frank's vision of an organic society in which values of the earth and the values of the machine are reconciled in a socialist community is set forth in a series of articles in *New Republic*, July of 1938.

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planes were symbolically present in other novels than Hemingway's. The bomber quickly became part of the sound effects, part of the backdrop, for scenes of conflict. Of the best known writers, John Dos Passos uses this image of terror in *The Adventures of a Young Man* and Michael Blankfort uses it in *The Brave and the Blind*. Upton Sinclair brings his *No Pasaran!* to a dime-novel close in which two Americans, cousins who have volunteered for opposing sides, fight it out. The quality of the novel is reflected faithfully in the triumph of the foot-soldier (Loyalist) who "does in" his airborne relative (Fascist).

In addition to the numerous one-act plays which make symbolic use of the airplane, two verse plays for radio, by well-known writers, dramatize the air attack itself. Archibald MacLeish, who had joined Lillian Hellman in raising money for *The Spanish Earth*, wrote *Air Raid*, in which bombers are described by the narrator as a form of dehumanized menace.

They swing like steel in a groove:
They move like tools not men:
You'd say there were no men:
You'd say they had no will but the
Will of motor on metal.

Implications of this vision become clearer as one recalls the visions of menaced primitivism that are found in MacLeish's earlier poem, *Conquistador*. Lacking this element of overt primitivism but quite as bitterly written, Norman Corwin's play, *They Fly Through the Air With the Greatest of Ease*, was, like dozens of poems and hundreds of editorials, written as a response to the brutal bombing by the Germans of the Basque village of Guernica,* a bombing which MacLeish denounced (in his speech to the 1937 meeting of the American Writers' Congress) as "the massacre of the civilian population of an undefended Basque village by German planes. . . . The

* For an astounding list of eminent men and women—from Christian Gauss and Clarence Darrow, Albert Einstein and Carrie Chapman Catt, to Alfred Landon and Harry Emerson Fosdick—see *The Crime of Guernica* (New York, 1937).

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Basques lie kicking in the fields where the machine guns caught up with them, and the Germans fly away."

When, as MacLeish in this speech emphasized, history consisted of horrors such as Guernica, it is not surprising that bombing planes appeared in the poetry of the Spanish war. Muriel Rukeyser has a long poem, "Correspondences," in which "crazies take to the planes" and the reader faces "machineries whose characters are wars." (Returning to America, she told New Yorkers that "The war there . . . is one of humans against guns.") Few poets wrote in her difficult experimental style; Norman Rosten's "Fragments for America" is completely exotic. Nevertheless, his version of the unequal combat between men and machines is disquieting. He writes of a

peasant who tried to stop an enemy plane
rising; ran cursing into the swift propeller
to stop it with his hands; the plane rising
. . . the sun shining on the stained steel. . .

Langston Hughes wrote that "A bombing plane's/The song of Spain," and added further poems to show what he meant, poems like "Air Raid: Barcelona," and "Moonlight in Valencia," in which he links airplanes and death and destroys the traditional connotations of moonlight: "Moonlight in Valencia: the moon meant planes./The planes meant death." Edwin Rolfe, in "A City of Anguish," describes Madrid under bombardment:

All night, all night
flared in my city the bright
cruel explosions of bombs.
All night, all night,
there, where the soil and stone
spilled like brains from the sandbag's head,
the bodiless head lay staring;
while the anti-aircraft barked,
barked at the droning plane. . .

Another poet, Boris Todrin, writes in a manner reminiscent of Hemingway's elegy to the American dead and the Spanish earth.

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Worn out fields where bomb and shell
Scattered iron seeds of hell,
Grow their scarecrow crops. The torn
Bones will keep the roots of corn.

John Berryman's more complex poem, "1938," contains bitter comments on the Spanish war and on the war that was still in preparation.

Across the frontiers of the helpless world
The great planes swarm, the carriers of death,
Germs in the healthy body of the air,
And blast our cities where we stand in talk
By doomed and comfortable fires.

In this helpless world beneath the iron bombers, poets found a metaphor grounded in reality. They found a still more specific metaphor when the "necessities" of modern warfare sanctioned the bombing of cities, for then it became "necessary" that children should die with their elders. Harold Rosenberg's eight-line "Spanish Epitaph" is representative of many poems:

O tall men of Hades
Have pity on this little one!
His speech was not formed yet
All he knew of life was laughing and growing
Till the iron dropped on him out of the sky.
O gaunt horses of Hades
He has not even one weapon
With which to defend himself.

Muriel Rukeyser's "M-Day's Child" contains this particular theme within the broader theme of mechanical horror.

M-day's child is fair of face,
Drill-day's child is full of grace,
Gun-day's child is breastless and blind,
Shell-day's child is out of its mind,
Bomb-day's child will always be dumb,
Cannon-day's child can never quite come,
but the child born on the Battle-day
is blithe and bonny and rotted away.

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Aaron Kramer, Charles Norman, and Norman Rosten are three poets, of dozens, who wrote of the bombers and the children.

If bombing planes are almost ubiquitous in the written accounts, they are scarcely less so in the visual arts of the Spanish war. Anton Refregier attempted a surrealistic vision of a bomber, a grotesque mixture of fiend and machine, but most American painters followed the lead of Luis Quintanilla, a Spanish painter whose drawings of the war were exhibited and published in America. In his preface to Quintanilla's book, Ernest Hemingway refers to the artist's combat experience in places "where men with rifles, hand grenades, and bundled sticks of dynamite faced tanks, artillery, and planes. . . ." We find the same opposition graphically transformed into peasants fleeing in ox-carts from planes that hover over ruined villages and slaughtered animals. Louis Ribak's *Refugees* can represent scores of American paintings with this theme. In an era when the reading of "stories" into paintings is suspect, it is useful to have Ernest Brace's comment on William Gropper's *Air Raid*:

One senses . . . the terror of implacable blind force, the senseless and indiscriminate destruction of human beings by other human beings too remote, too mechanically indifferent to wonder who or why.

Just as the contrast between men and bombers becomes, in literature, most striking when the child is opposed to the Heinkel or Caproni, so in the iconography of the Spanish war the contrast is most awful when represented in these images. Aldous Huxley, editing a book of drawings by Spanish children, noted the following:

For hundreds of thousands of children in Spain . . . the plane, with its bombs and its machine guns, is the thing that is significant and important above all others. . . . This is the dreadful fact to which the drawings in our collection bear unmistakable witness.

The briefest examination of the pictures themselves is enough to convince us that the children did indeed live in dread of the air raids. In drawing after drawing we see ruined cities, the little figures of fleeing people, and the disproportionately en-

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larged bombing planes. We cannot escape a sense of shame when looking at the drawings or when reading an anecdote recounted by André Malraux in the *Nation* 9 March 1937. The anecdote concerns the distribution of toys to the children of Madrid:

When it was all over, there remained in the immense empty space one little heap, untouched. . . . It was a pile of toy airplanes. It lay there in the deserted bull-ring where any child could have helped himself. The little boys had preferred anything, even dolls, and had kept away from that pile of toy airplanes . . . with a sort of mysterious horror.

Pablo Picasso's *Guernica* is no more pertinent to our theme, no more disturbing a revelation of *la condition humaine* in the twentieth century.

These samples are a token of the pervasiveness, within American interpretations of the Spanish war, of the theme of conflict between men and machines, and of the image of the machine, especially the bombing plane, as the appropriate symbol for the terrible realities of the war. When we turn to the work of two European novelists, Ralph Bates and André Malraux, I believe that we can observe certain differences between the American and the European imagination.* Ralph Bates' novel, *The Olive Field*, describes the tumult of the years preceding the actual outbreak of war. Agricultural laborers are pitted against effete landowners who collect ancient manuscripts and against ascetic priests who do not understand, as the workers do, that "the olive trees [are] the very spirit of the land." The action reaches a climax in the Left revolution of 1934, where, as Malcolm Cowley noted, the spontaneous action of the *dynamiteros* is overmatched by tanks and planes. When the civil war became international, Bates joined the Republican side and fought through what he later called, in the *Virginia*

* I believe that my case could be made by discussing British poets—Stephen Spender, W. H. Auden, C. Day Lewis, George Barker, John Cornford—or German novelists—Alfred Kantorowicz, Ludwig Renn, Gustav Regler, Arthur Koestler—but the quality, quantity, availability, and popularity of Bates and Malraux combine so as to make them the best subjects for a short commentary.

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Quarterly Review, “the legendary time” in which the hastily organized and badly armed militias fought against machine guns, tanks, and planes. In the preface to a book on Spain, he told of a

docker who had charged through rifle, machine-gun and *artillery* fire, with a broken plank through which he had hammered nails as his sole weapon. That dock worker was . . . preparing to go to the Aragon front, with an old and defective shot-gun.

In an article published in the *New Republic*, he wrote:

Unarmed men leap on the gunners, wrestle with them, strangle them, drag them to the ground and stab them with knives. Men dive at the machine guns . . . and upset them with their hands.

This report ends with the plea of the Spanish peasant, “Companero Americano, will you *sell* us rifles? Italian aircraft . . . roar overhead.” Of a plowman who sang folk-songs, Bates speculated, “I suppose he is dead now, because he would certainly have tried to defend the Republic with a shotgun against those Caproni and Junkers which nightly raid us.” (Compare this with the prayer which Eliot Paul in *The Life and Death of a Spanish Town*, puts into the mouth of a Franco-izing priest: “Our Father, Who art in Heaven, give us our daily round of ammunition, and blunt pitchforks to our enemies.”) Bates emphasized this same theme in reviewing John Langdon-Davies’ widely-read *Behind the Spanish Barricades*: “The true Spanish tradition is [with] those men who have gone out to battle ill-armed, often literally unarmed, against the destructive machines of international fascism.” And, of all writings on the Spanish war, Bates’ short stories, collected in *Sirocco and Other Stories*, are closest to Hemingway’s in tone and in theme. The protagonists are usually close to the land; their antagonists are associated with mechanized authoritarianism. In “The 43rd Division,” published in *Harper’s*, Bates’ peasant-hero considers the Spanish war and condemns the new modes of warfare:

The mechanical aid to the rebels was violating the nature of the Spaniard. Man to man, valor against valor; that was the Spanish way

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of fighting. Not factory against factory, bald-head engineer against peasant.

The crucial episode of this story embodies the same theme. An izard (a type of chamois) gives birth and a Fascist, equipped with a panoply of technical implements—Luger, Mannlicher-Cacano, Zeis range-finder, Leitz binoculars—kills the animal. Seeing this attack upon the natural order, the peasant-hero resolves his indecisions, vows to accept discipline, and is given command of a guerrilla unit. This story is more successful than Bates' accounts of men in the regular army because, in a sense, the guerrilla unit is a compromise which permits the maintenance of a closeness to nature and, at the same time, the acceptance of a form of discipline. In literature both worlds were possible; outside of literature, Bates had to choose, and he chose the Popular Front of Juan Negrin and Julio Alvarez del Vayo, the discipline, the organization, the technological weapons, and the promise of a socialist Spain in which the machine and the olive tree are harmonized.

Excellent as many of these stories are, André Malraux's *L'Espoir* is the only piece of writing which compares with *For Whom the Bell Tolls* or George Orwell's magnificent *Homage to Catalonia*. No other European novel (of dozens) contains so much of the complexity of the Spanish Civil War. In *L'Espoir*, Hemingway's theme of primitivism—the affirmation of the natural man in the natural landscape—is sounded with a marvelous sense of the ambiguous overtones, and then subordinated to another theme. True to the European revolutionary tradition, Malraux debates and finally decides against the values of a primitive society. As Malcolm Cowley and Joseph Warren Beach separately noted, the struggle of the unarmed mobs against the troops of the Montana Barracks and the fight of the almost unarmed *milicianos* against tanks and armored trains, provide many of the most moving passages of the book, *but* this affirmation of the unorganized activity of the anarchists does *not* persist through the novel. The conflict between man and machine becomes less important as Russian equipment ar-

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rives. Scenes of heroic struggle against a mechanical enemy give way to descriptions of victory won by those who turn from the land in order to fight metal with metal. The somehow humanized "crates" of the circus-like volunteer air-force are replaced by modern flying machines; the pilots learn the necessity of obedience. As Malraux's spokesman argues, "Notre modeste fonction. . . C'est d'organiser L'Apocalypse." Realizing the hopeless situation of the unarmed human being, Malraux, like *most* writers, finds in this realization a call to action—the *militianos* must be mechanized. Russian *chatos* climb into the air over Malraux's Madrid as they did over the Madrid of historical fact. It is true that the theme of discipline and the dramatic victory of the International Brigades at Guadalajara are interwoven with another strand, with the theme of primitivism and the uncoerced action of the peasants who, late in the novel, carry down from the mountains, in ritual procession, the survivors of a wrecked airplane; nevertheless, despite this extraordinarily moving episode, Malraux's *explicit* approval is with the organizers of the Apocalypse, with the Stalinists. (By "Stalinists" I mean those who followed the tactics of Georgi Dimitroff's "Popular Front" and whose ultimate strategy was the socialization and industrialization of a "progressive" Spain.) In taking this position, which F. W. Dupee lamented in the anti-Stalinist *Partisan Review*, Malraux was anticipating historical developments. As the war continued, discipline was imposed upon the militiamen and modern weapons were placed in the hands of the peasants; the *Volunteer for Liberty*, newspaper of the English-speaking battalions of the International Brigades, replaced pictures of "half-armed militiamen," firing from the earth at enemy planes, with pictures and charts of Soviet industrialization, with praise for the rigidly military *Ejército Popular*; James Hawthorne and Louis Fischer, correspondents for *New Masses* and the *Nation*, boasted of the "brand new beauty" of the Loyalists' airplanes, poets wrote elegies for Ben Leider, an American killed while flying in Spanish combat (Rosten wrote: "O Icarus, welcome him, / wingless now, and a wanderer"), and even Ralph Bates sounded the

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harsh call to discipline and argued that the “legendary time” was over and had to be replaced by a more “realistic” attitude. In taking this position, however grudgingly, men like Malraux and Bates are, finally, representative of the mainstream of European radicalism, members of a tradition which has, for the most part, rejected the strong element of primitivistic anarchism found in American *and* in Spanish radicalism. Although Karl Marx characterized modern man in industrial society as living in a state of alienation, Marxian socialism argues forwards through the dictatorship of the proletariat to a classless society in which technology is used for the benefit of mankind and not as the instrument of exploitation. Marxism does not look backwards to a vision of primitivistic anarchism.

At the end of his chapter on the pond in winter, Henry Thoreau described the symbolic voyage of the ice cut from Walden Pond.

The pure Walden Water is mingled with the sacred water of the Ganges. With favoring winds it is wafted past the site of the fabulous islands of Atlantis and the Hesperides, makes the periplus of Hanno, and, floating by Ternate and Tidore and the mouth of the Persian Gulf, melts in the tropic gales of the Indian seas, and is landed in ports of which Alexander only heard the names.

The movement of this passage is towards Asiatic shores, and the flow of metaphors carries us backwards in time. It is, perhaps, an oddity of the history of ideas that the influence of *Walden* was felt in Asia, by primitivistic anarchists like Mahatma Gandhi and Leo Tolstoy, and far less strongly in industrialized Europe; Friedrich Engels and Karl Marx dreamed not of the past but of the future, and never saw the “pure Walden water” mingle with the waters of the Thames.

III

Considering this theme of conflict between men and machines, it seems reasonable to suggest that at least part of the extraordinary fascination of the Spanish Civil War and part of the fanatical intensity of feeling among Americans here and in

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Spain, is related to a widespread if barely articulated (or even unarticulated) fear of the implications, and the actualities, of technological society. We can ask two questions: Does this theme of opposition of man and machines represent a fear of machines as such or only the fears of those for whom machines were not yet available, or novel, or in the hands of an enemy? Does this fear have a counterpart in an affirmation of man in a natural, organic relationship to the land, in a tendency towards that stream of primitivism which has run, underground for the most part, through Western civilization since Montaigne's essay on the cannibals? Any answers to these questions are, of course, extremely inconclusive, but the evidence indicates that most men, for one reason or another and despite their fears of a mechanized enemy, were quite willing to equip themselves with modern weapons. When the Spanish war ended and the Second World War began, most of those who condemned the *Luftwaffe* became enthusiastic over the R.A.F. and, eventually, the United States Air Force. Hiroshima caused less of a stir than Guernica.

However, to say that most men are not primitivists is not to say that they are untouched by the values of primitivism, by a desire for the spontaneity and the freedom from repression which we associate with an organic relationship to the natural landscape. What Ernest Hemingway has done in *For Whom the Bell Tolls* has been to orchestrate and make central a theme which runs through scores of other writers and artists. He has, to change the figure, turned the various images of value into the characters of a drama, his version of the Spanish tragedy. Although the greatest caution must be exercised, we can surely study Hemingway's ordering of the historical events and speculate whether there is not within a vast complex of other and often contradictory values an association of freedom with the earth, of tyranny with machines; on the one hand, fertility and spontaneity, and on the other, sterility and repression. The spectre of an urbanized, industrialized, mechanized and regimented world, a spectre that has haunted the romantic imagination since Blake's dark

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Satanic mills and Melville's Tartarus of Maids, seemed—to Ernest Hemingway, John Dos Passos, Waldo Frank, Archibald MacLeish, a few men like them—to have materialized, to have become the bombing planes over Madrid and Barcelona. Perhaps this is but, to use Ernest Cassirer's term, the symbol-maker's way of saying that capitalism was, in some countries, becoming Fascism. The problem is that the Marxists' vision of a Spain dotted with Magnitogorsks and Pittsburghs does not easily harmonize with the primitivists' vision of the Spain of Don Quixote and Sancho Panzo, wherein, in John Dos Passos' phrase, we could find Rosinante on the road again.

Looking back at the Spanish war, we see now that Hemingway's primitivistic Spain was doomed the minute that the British Foreign Office warned Léon Blum that his aiding the Spanish Republic meant the end of the Franco-British alliance. Faced by the mechanized armies of Germany and Italy, the Loyalists had either to secure modern weapons and a unified command, or go down in defeat. The failure of the Spanish Republic in that effort to arm itself and to achieve political unity meant the coming of a Spanish version of Fascism; *and*, had the Loyalists succeeded in their efforts, the Spanish peasants would have been forced in the process to accept limitations on their famous individualism (their "*personalismo*"), to adopt the mechanized weapons of modern war, to surrender their archaic relationship with the hard, dry, Spanish earth, to become members of technologically-based mass-society that might or might not have resulted eventually in the Marxist utopia. In either case, the result would have been a curtailment of freedom and an increase of repression. In other words, there was in Spain as in nineteenth-century America the dilemma and the paradox of primitivism and progress which Henry Nash Smith has studied in *Virgin Land*; just as the dream of America as a new Garden of Eden contradicted the dream of America as an industrialized titan, so the attempt to discipline the Spanish and to raise them from their "feudal" past (represented historically and poetically by landlord, bishop, general) contradicted the desire to

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preserve a spontaneous, organic, archaic relationship of man and nature.

Joy Davidman, in her *Letter to a Comrade*, wrote bravely about the unarmed Loyalists,

We have only the bodies of men to put together,
the wincing flesh, the peeled white forking stick,
easily broken, easily made sick,
frightened of pain and spoiled by evil weather;
we have only the most brittle of all things the man
and the heart the most iron admirable thing of all,
and putting these together we make a wall,

but Hemingway's interpretation seems closer to the historical truth when Robert Jordan is left, crippled and alone, waiting for the newest conquerors. Perhaps the novel is closer to historical fact only because *The Spanish Earth* failed to move us enough, because there were too many Stanley Baldwins and Cordell Hulls and too few Anselmos and Robert Jordans, because the western democracies abandoned Spain to a choice between two forms of totalitarianism. Confronted by the mechanized enemy, Hemingway's primitivism becomes an impossible vision, but that is *not* to say that the values associated with primitivism are not still valid ones; one need not be a primitivist to feel that technological society today is both repressive and frighteningly unstable. Perhaps we can thank the "practical men" of the 1930s that, in an era of ballistic missiles and atomic warheads, we are all as helpless as the children beneath the bombing planes.

At any rate, the extraordinary thing about the Spanish war is that the historical facts seemed almost of themselves to dramatize the conflicts of our time; the material facts did, as in nineteenth-century America, correspond to the spiritual facts, or, to continue in Emerson's language, the situation was such that the poet could attach the word to the thing. Within the labyrinth of events which historians have agreed to call the Spanish Civil War, there was once again, on foreign soil, as so often before in our literature, that opposition of "the two

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kingdoms of force" which Leo Marx, writing in the *Massachusetts Review*, sees as central to our experience:

For the contrast between the two cardinal images of value, the machine and the native landscape, dramatizes the great issue of our culture. It is the germ, as Henry James put it, of the most final of all questions about America.

In other words, Hemingway's vision of the Spanish war has its roots in a very *American* tradition of thought and feeling. The Spanish war was, among other things, a fight against the desecration of that relationship between man and nature which Natty Bumppo sought in forest and prairie, which Henry Thoreau found while floating quietly on Walden Pond, which Herman Melville pursued in his quest for an "authentic Eden in a pagan sea," which Walt Whitman saw in a blade of summer grass, which Huck and Jim discovered while drifting down the Mississippi on a raft, which William Faulkner finds in the mule-powered and horse-swapping South, which John Dos Passos envisioned when he wrote that the "villages are the heart of Spain," which Ernest Hemingway located in upper Michigan and in an African Spain. We found in the Spanish war a mirror which reflected the image of our own unquiet desperation.