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Ernest Hemingway, Screenwriter: New Letters on *For Whom the Bell Tolls*

BY PETER CARROLL

Living with a writer is a touchy matter, and when one writer lives with another writer, as I do with Jeannette Ferrary, you learn to form sturdy but permeable walls of separation—lines of demarcation that sustain privacy and independent creativity and yet permit the sharing of insight and phrasing and correction. We make sure to work on different terrain. But sometimes, fortuitously, our interests overlap. Five years ago, as I embarked on a history of the Lincoln Brigade and the Spanish civil war, my mate began work on a biographical study of her friend, the writer M.F.K. Fisher. When I traveled to Brandeis University to read archival letters from Spain, she drove down the road to peruse Fisher's correspondence from the same era at the Schlesinger Library in Cambridge.

It was oral history, however, that produced the most splendid convergence. One day, we found ourselves focusing on the same source, the highly respected editor and publisher Eleanor Friede. She is a strong-voiced woman of about seventy, who was then living in a fine old red-brick home in Greenwich Village, and she had the distinction of being the fifth wife and widow of the remarkable impresario, publisher, and agent, Donald Friede. And the late Mr. Friede, in his diverse careers and incarnations, held the strands that brought us three together. For Mrs. Friede's marital predecessor—the fourth of Donald's wives—was none other than Mary

Frances Kennedy Fisher. But even before he had wed either of these women, Friede had made his mark in literary circles as co-founder of Covici & Friede, publishers of John Steinbeck, William Faulkner, Dorothy Parker, and Ernest Hemingway, among other luminaries. In addition, Friede had acted as the Hollywood agent on behalf of Hemingway's Spanish civil war novel, For Whom the Bell Tolls, which Paramount bought in 1940 for the record-breaking sum of \$100,000 plus ten cents for each copy of the book sold.

"Did he have much of a relationship with Hemingway?" I inquired on a sunny Saturday afternoon, as we sat in Mrs. Friede's tiny back-yard patio consuming Brillat-Savarin cheese, French bread, and white wine.

"For a while," she responded.

"By any chance," I dared to ask, "were there any letters from Hemingway about the Spanish civil war?"

Indeed there were. But because of the circumstances by which Donald Friede departed his employment with Myron Selznick, himself a Hollywood agent and brother of the famous producer David Selznick, there existed only copies of the originals. Addressed to Donald Friede, the correspondence was actually intended for the eyes of Dudley Nichols, screenwriter of the movie version of Hemingway's novel. Carlos Baker, in his magisterial biography, Ernest Hemingway: A Life Story (1969), used Friede's copies but did not quote from them directly. The letters that follow are here printed for the first time through the kindness of Eleanor Friede and with the permission of Linda Wagner-Martin of the Ernest Hemingway Foundation & Society. Variant spelling is in the original; typos are corrected in brackets.

[All Hemingway's letters to Donald Friede were addressed to him c/o Myron Selznick, Beverly Hills, Calif. In September 1944 copies of these letters were sent to Friede at A. and S. Lyons, Inc. at David O. Selznick's request.—Ed.]

March 3, 1942

Dear Donald:

I am studying the Nichols' script very closely. I am sorry that you sent it to me under the circumstances which you did. There is a war on and no one has any right to send a script as confidential when the way it is handled can have such wide implications and be so dangerous. It is my duty to protest against various things in the script and sending it to me confidentially while we are at war can not relieve me of the responsibility for protesting.

What I am anxious for and always have been anxious for is for Paramount to make a good picture. I am not protesting because I want to make any money coming into the thing at this time. But there are certain points about the Nichols script which are really dangerously bad from the standpoint of making a picture which will be useful to our country's war effort at this time. There are also a number of things which are simply stupid and which I can easily correct myself. Principally, these are things dealing with Spain where he has made changes without knowing what he was talking about so that the resulting dialogue could be ludicrous to anyone in a Latin American country. Also reference etc. and great errors in fact and probability. I am reading the script carefully and will write you a letter telling you the various things which I find to be dangerous. If Paramount would send Nichols down here, I could go into all of the other things with him. As it is, I think you were extremely overenthusiastic about the script. In spite of the very bad dialogue, much of which could be corrected, it could be a good script with certain things put right. As it is, unless certain changes are made I will have to protest against it through the medium which will give my protest the widest amount of circulation, which would be, I imagine, an interview with the Associated Press correspondent here in Havana.

Will you please write me your reactions as soon as you receive this letter.

Please believe, Donald, that I have no intention of creating difficulty or causing trouble because I am an author who does not want to see any changes made in his work when it is transmitted to the screen. It is simply that I can not allow a book which has had over 500,000 readers and which on the screen can be an extremely valuable asset in our fight against Fascism, to be presented in any other way than that, without doing everything that I can to keep the

book from being sabotaged.

I will write you later when I have completed a study of it. There is no sense in my doing a rewrite job for nothing for Paramount, but I would be glad to do that rather than see the book sabotaged.

Best to you always,

Ernest (Hemingway)

cc: Mr. Selznick, File

Unless corrections made, will also protest immediately to Cooper who accepted Nichols script on my guaranty Nichols would write a script which would not distort the true significance of the book.

Finca Vigia San Francisco de Paula Cuba
March 16, 1942

Dear Donald:

I was glad to get your letter, but somewhat amazed at your attitude about the script. You should never have sent it to me, nor should Dudley Nichols have expected you to send it to me without expecting me to do something about the ignorant, the inept and the dangerously wrong phases of it. To send something like that and then say you cannot comment on it or do anything about it except through Nichols himself, who is an excellent fellow but really only an employee of Paramount, without exposing him and yourself to trouble, is very bad for me. I suggested Dudley Nichols doing the job because I thought he would write a good script and would keep it straight. The excuse that it is not so bad as Bromfield or a thousand times better than Bromfield, is not what we are after. What we are after is to make a fine picture out of what was, at least, a good book. The book had to have certain definite elements of popular appeal to sell the number of copies that it sold. People go to a picture because a certain star or stars are playing in it and if the star is good enough to carry it, a great number of people go to see it anyway. Other people go simply because it is all they have to see and they have a habit of going to pictures. If it is really a great picture with a great star an indeterminable number of people go to see it. But the book costs, this one anyway, \$2.75 and when six or seven hundred thousand people pay that out the book must have certain things to make that

many people buy it. If this sounds like a kindergarden explanation it is because I am trying to get the whole thing straight to you so that you can let Dudley see the letter and see what I am trying to get at. To make it really clear I have to make it very simple and not skip anything.

“For Whom the Bell Tolls” had three things that sold it to people. The best thing it had was to show what men and women would die for and it concentrated and made come really true what one man would die for. The second thing it had was the true relation in bed between two people. This was all concentrated into the short space of four days. The third thing that it had was a fine action story in which the movement progressed steadily from the beginning to the end and all details were made so truly that the reader felt that he had lived the things that happened in the book.

I can see how much worse Dudley’s script could have been. There is no question about it at all, nor that he has tried to follow faithfully much of the book. Where his script fails is that it gives nothing of the reason for which a man will die and know it is well for him to die. It gives nothing of Pilar’s true feeling for the Republic which is the animating motif for the whole band. That is the first and greatest loss and the thing which will make it essentially a second-rate rather than a first-rate picture.

I understand his problems in the treating of the relations between Maria and Jordan, but that does not excuse him for having been inept, sometimes ridiculous and often grotesque in the writing of his love scenes. I can truly say that they are really weak and bad love scenes and the dialogue about the twins is enough to kill the picture. I have tried conscientiously to see the good effect of where he is writing for Gary and how Gary would handle the lines, but much of it is really terrible. So, we have two-thirds of the picture, the strength of it, all of which could be retained in spite of any Hays office [r]ulings, already thrown away. I can see how a man can have to vulgarize some things under orders and how to earn his money he will substitute his own bad dialogue for good dialogue, which if he were not paid to rewrite he might have stolen or imitated as has been done often enough in the past. But there is no reason to condone fatal ignorance, bad writing and bad construction in the script of a picture which means as much as this picture means. It can be a great picture or a disastrous flop and Dudley has taken a terrible responsibility in the way he has bitched it up.

The good part that he has done is to write good action. Bu[t] in his action he has neglected the other two things that made the book, and one, at least, of these could very well have been included.

The other thing which is extremely important is his treatment of all of the people of Pilar's band. If you know Spaniards you can kid them in writing about them or projecting them, but if you do not know them and are simply visualizing the long line of phonies that have appeared in all such disastrous films as the last "Blood and Sand," you're headed straight for disaster. The Spaniards in this book are not out of Carmen. There are no picturesque rags, no bandanas, none of the ghastly falseness of that last flop of Mamoulian. The clothes should be dignified and hard. The whole note is dignity. The men should be dressed in grays and in blacks and whites, and for Christ's sake let there be no "bright colored bandanas" worn around the heads as there are in Dudley's script.

I have many more points to make but I should start now to take up some of the script to show you what I am talking about technically. You realize, Donald, that by your lovely handling of this you have forced me into doing a gratis partial rewrite of the Nichols script simply as a protest against its ignorance and ineptness. That is a piece of agent-ship that you ought to be eternally proud of. The way you have handled it, Dudley is bitched if I protest to Paramount; I am a s.o.b. if I say anything about having seen the script; and I can not make suggestions to Paramount but only to Dudley. I hope you will at least arrange to get some money out of Dudley for yourself for my services in correcting his script for him. Seeing this handling certainly makes me feel good that I closed the deal with Paramount in Chicago myself over the telephone rather than leaving it in anybody else's hands.

To start with the script, following Nichols' apologetic note about length, there is a page headed, "People." Under the band of El Sordo one character is called Rinaldo. This is an Italian name, not a Spanish one. Evidently, it is a hang-over in Dudley's memory from, "A Farewell to Arms." I suggest the substitution of the name Paco or Enrique or Segundo. In the same list of characters General Golz is described as a German who directs the offensive for the Loyalists. Golz in the book is a Russian who has taken that *nom-de-guerre* which was that of a great German general. I suggest that he be described as an officer from the Soviet Union. In the same list of characters, Andre Marty is described by his own name as a French

political commis[s]ar who is an insane fanatic. I used the true name, Andre Marty, in the book. In a year or so I will be broke and neither Andre Marty nor his descendents, if they sue me, will be able to obtain any damages. The Guaranty Trust tell me that Paramount probably will not be broke for some time and I suggest that you change the name of Andre Marty in order that they do not have another Youssopoff suit on their hands. I suggest you change the name to Paul Massart or Paul Carré or Andre Massart.

In sequence A, where Jordan and Kashkin blow the train they would never have been alone. There would have been supporting guerrilla troops with at least one machine gun to fire on the train after the explosion in order to cover the retreat of the men who had used the exploder and to kill as many of the troops as possible when they got out of the cars. This whole scene is badly visualized and for it to be done right you should see the guerrilla troops hidden behind the rocks, Kashkin handling the machine gun, Jordan with the exploder, and then far away the train, first small in the distance, then getting larger and larger as it comes up the track and the tightening of the people who are expecting it and then the train blowing its whistle, you seeing the steam, then hearing the sound come, and then finally the train closer and closer, and the roar of the explosion, and then the blown up engine, the derailed cars, the troops swarming out, the machine gun hammering, the officers trying to form them up in some kind of order, the toll the guerrillas take, and finally their break for the hills and the firing of the troops and the pursuit. When Kashkin is hit and wishes to say goodbye to Jordan, he would never say, "adios," which was a phrase used only in old Spain and never under the Republic. In that extremely dubious scene of Nichols' I would have said, "salud," and Jordan would have used the same word. Even that way it is ham but at least salud is the proper word and the other word in such a place in the mouth of anyone fighting for the Republic is ridiculous. Also, when Jordan shoots Kashkin he would not fire three times into his head. Anyone shooting a person who is being shot willingly or asking to be shot would shoot them once in the back of the head, putting the muzzle close to the head. The three shots in Dudley's script are horrible and ridiculous. This scene could be written so clearly and so effectively and instead it is a botch in the dark which will only confuse people and lose all the advantages of making the picture real to those who see it rather than phony and foggy.

After this first scene, Jordan meets Golz in a scene which seems to come straight out of "Blood and Sand." Why could Nichols not have had Jordan meet the general in the latter's headquarters rather than in a completely unreal and impossibly phony situation in Madrid. For a general to meet a man carrying out guerrilla operations behind the enemy lines in a cafe and in that cafe to show a map and the plans for an attack is as unreal as for a girl to be raped in St. Patrick's Cathedral during a High Mass. One of the finest and best things about American pictures is their fidelity to how things would be and how they actually are. But this scene of Dudley's is extremely and utterly ridiculous and sets a note of silliness and unreality for the whole picture. Golz' language in speaking to Jordan is amateurish and stupid. All the effects which are needed could be made by clear, hard-spoken military language which would be clearly comprehensible to any audience rather than the type of mush that is put in the mouth of Golz. I can correct this language for Dudley and will do so if you and he wish, otherwise I refer him to the book. As it is it is very bad. The only way he could keep his cafe stuff would be for Golz and Jordan to meet in the cafe and then go around corner to Golz' headquarters, which would be guarded by sentries in a side street.

And now skip to page A-17 where Pablo says, "But every day the vermin gets stronger." Why not say Fascists instead of vermin. We are at present engaged in fighting a war against the Fascists. It was always the Fascists that were referred to in Spain and to make the issue clear it is best to use this term. No one in America knows what a Falangist is but everyone should, or will by the time the picture comes out, know what a Fascist is. On the same page where Pablo says, "Before the war I worked in the bull ring." This does not give a clear picture. It would be better to say, "I looked after the horses in the bull ring." On page A-18 the sentence, "lifts his arm to Pablo." This is the Fascist salute. He should raise his clenched fist to Pablo.

The next sequence where all of the band are working very comically around a machine gun is really very bad. These men have been fighting guerrilla actions for a year and a half and if they have been using a Lewis gun, any of them should be able to take it apart and put it together blind-folded in the dark. The idea of making them simply ridiculous figures in order to make Jordan more of a man is part of the whole silliness of the treatment of Spaniards which insists that any foreigner must be a fool. Remember that practically all the

people in this picture except Jordan are Spaniards and these are the people you are fighting a battle with and you should not make them idiots at this stage simply for the sake of a misplaced laugh. This sequence is infinitely stronger if it were written this way: The men are grouped around the gun which has been taken down and the parts spread on a blanket. Remember, these men expect to defend their lives with this gun and no one would take it down and scatter parts about or have the ludicrous jigsaw puzzle complex which has been inserted for a gag. Actually, Cooper would look down at the gun and say, "What happened to her?" One of the men answers, "We had a jam on it at the last train and it wouldn't eject." Cooper draws in his upper lip, stoops and looks closely at the parts that are spread out on the blanket. He says, "How are you getting along with it?" One of the men answers, "All right. We had to make a piece but it doesn't quite fit." They go on working on the gun. Cooper leans down and picks up one of the pieces. He says, "Let me see the extractor." They all look up at him with varying shades of doubt and distrust on their faces. He takes out a worn leather case attached by a leather thong to his pocket and extracts a file and works on the piece with the file, bringing his lower lip up over his upper lip as he works. They all watch him. "I always carry an extra extractor in the butt plate," he says. "There was an extra one," the gypsy says, "but it cracked at the last train." "They'll all crack if you fire too long bursts," Cooper says. "This one is going to be all right. Try it now." He turns away and Primitivo starts fitting the gun together. Continue with Nichols.

On page A-24 where the gypsy says, "I am a trapper, Roberto." There is no such thing as a trapper in Spain. A man may trap a few things but he is not a professional trapper as in America. The line should be, "I do some trapping too."

On page A-32 at the bottom of the page where Pilar says, "How are you and how is everything on the other side of the lines?" It should be, "How are you and how is everything in the Republic." This is to establish as soon as possible her fixation on the Republic and her illusion that everything is fine and which is her motive for what she is doing and for what they are all fighting for. It is extremely important that this be established as soon as possible, for otherwise what are all these people doing fighting in the hills after a year and a half and what is Jordan doing? There must be something established which they believe in and for which they are fighting. In the book it is the Republic and it is the use of that word which is

something that we also in America believe in and are now fighting for and which gives the word a dignity so that it gives a true symbol of what the fight is all about. Throughout the picture the enemy should be called the Fascists and the Republic should be called the Republic, not simply ourselves and the enemy. This in the script is a hangover from Bromfield's treatment whereby the whole action was to take place in Limbo and no one was to be offended in any way. But now we have had Pearl Harbor and various other things and by the time the picture is released it is perfectly possible we will have an expeditionary force fighting in Spain. You take a much greater chance of ruining the picture by not having the names clearly stated and issues clearly drawn than you do in trying to muddle along in order to appease the enemies of our country and please Jock Whitney and any of his Fascist inclined relatives. I mean specifically his brother-in-law, Charlie Payson.

On page A-34 the same observation holds true when Pilar says, "Now we have horses. Let's blow all the bridges and get out." She should continue, "Let's go to the Republic. I am sick of this place," and so on.

On page A-38 the scene with Anselmo and Jordan where they watch the sentry at the bridge is horribly ham. Anselmo says that the sentry looks like a man from his village and then whispers, "Yes, he looks like the son of Sanchez. He is very young." Sanchez is as common a name in Spanish as Smith here. Even if Anselmo were to make such a ham remark he would say, "The son of Domingo Sanchez or Rodrigo Sanchez," but never "the son of Sanchez" any more than you would say, "the son of Smith of Chicago." The whole scene is very bad and should be rewritten. It loses all tensivity through the bad philosophical blah-blah uttered at a time when men would only whisper to each other about the most practical details. That type of talking is only justified after the action has taken place and people are let down, as when Anselmo and Jordan were climbing back to camp after inspecting the bridge.

Because I am so severe where the script is wrong, do not think that I do not appreciate the good parts that Dudley has done, but this is like a battle, and there is no time for praising something that has gone properly. The defects must be corrected and where no censure or praise is given, it means that one understands what the man has done with what he has had to work with.

On page 46, the last line should go for the same reasons I have

mentioned before, "I am for the bridge and for the Republic." Unless you make this emphasis the people seeing the picture will have no idea what the people were really fighting for. Since it is told which side is which, the emphasis must be made in order for there to be any emotional basis at all for what they are doing.

On page 51 the description of Jordan's robe should read, "covering of warm green balloon silk," rather than "silk." Also where does he get the folded blanket for a pillow? Why not have him fold up his jacket? The man can't carry a ton of stuff around with him.

On page 55 Rafael says, "Can he be allowed to live now, after what has been said?" It is much better to have him say, "Why don't you kill him before he kills you?" And for Jordan to answer, "He won't kill me."

On page 58 where Jordan says, fed up, "Go to bed. I told you I am no assassin." It is much better to say, "Go to bed. There is no need to kill now." He would not chuck that word assassin around, offending everybody and talking in such a high faluting way. If you are to make the picture credible, Jordan must have some sense in his handling of the people and also I am against these horrible hammy phrases, such as on page 59, "You know Pablo better than I do. Is there danger of treachery?" This should read, "You know Pablo better than I do. What will he do?" This has equal menace in it without the use of such hammy words in conversation as treachery.

On page 61, why should Jordan say, "Yes. More safe."? Why not say, "safer?" He is supposed to be able to speak both English and Spanish without having to go into pidgin English to show that he is speaking in a foreign language.

On page 62, where does Pilar get this bed in the cave? Wouldn't she have a simple blanket bed like anyone else? Where would such a bed come from? If you can figure out where it would come from and see how they hauled it up there and put it in, then it is O.K. to have it. As a matter of fact, if they made tables, they could make a bed or loot one, so Dudley can have his bed if he needs it, although I do not remember any bed.

On page 71 please use the word "planes" or the Spanish word, "aviones" instead of "air machines." Air machines is as idiotic and corny used in Spanish or with Spanish people as if you would have someone referring to flying machines instead of planes in the American Army. The same holds true for that horrible corniness about the "machinery gun." The audience know that these people are

Spaniards and are foreigners and it is not necessary to make them idiots.

On page 73, why not say Fascists instead of Falangists. Not one out of 200 Americans will know what a Falangist is in spite of the Dies Committee and for the South American trade they can always put Falangist in the sub-titles. In the English-speaking version it should always be Fascist.

On page 78, I must express my admiration for the phrase, "climbing as hurriedly as they can through gigantically beautiful scenery." Don't you think it would be better to indicate what the scenery is like that they are climbing through or don't we learn anything from such films as "The Grand Illusion?"

On page 85, Gustavo is middle aged and wears long mustaches. I think this is the same Italian influence that got the other guy called Rinaldo. There haven't been any long mustaches on a Spaniard in the last 100 years. Please keep long mustaches off everybody in the picture unless you are prepared to furnish little cartons for the audience to vomit in for the South American trade.

Reading over the Maria and Jordan scenes up until page 121, they are probably the best that Dudley could get out of what he was ordered to do. They are quite unreal and not at all credible but they are in motion picture tradition of what happens between two people of the opposite sex and have been carefully styled to Gary. People forget what a good actor Gary is and how many things he can do besides hesitate and seem embarrassed at the thought of any emotion. I think he had hoped in this picture to get away from this but Dudley has fed steadily to those two abilities of his rather than to what he is really able to do. It makes me sick to see what has been done and how a picture which can be a great picture and still not run afoul of any Hays office, has been cut in all the love part up until page 147 into the stupidest conventional shy-dope-meets-pure-young-thing-who-has-suffered. Neither of these people had much time for shyness but I can see how well Dudley has been cutting it to what they said they would take. If that was not the circumstance, then he ought to be shot.

On page 138, if this scene is not to be simply a brutal massacre, there should be an insert after the line, "Don Federico Gonzalez who came next was a Fascist of the first order." The insert should tell in the words of the book why he was a Fascist. It needs only to be a sentence in length, otherwise no one knows why any of these people

were killed, or what the townspeople had against them, and the whole killing is a meaningless butchery. I know that Dudley did not inten[d] it to be this way and it is simply a matter of an insertion of one sentence which he can find in the book.

Throughout I am not criticising construction since the script has reached a phase where it would be useless for me to do that. I am simply trying to supply certain things which are necessary and which are missing and to correct certain things which demand correction if it is not to be misleading and ridiculous.

On page 151 I think it is much more effective if the line reads, "Cavalry don't ride alone," instead of, "Soldiers don't ride alone."

I will give you the rest of the corrections and a general summing up in another installment. Will take the script with me to Mexico City where I am going on Wednesday and will dictate corrections, etc., on the rest of the script from there. You can reach me by wire and airmail until April 2, c/o William Davis, Uruguay 69, Mexico, D.F.

If I sound bitter in this, please throw it out, the bitterness or any rudeness or insults. I am trying to be accurate and correct in a hurry and it is like being on a boat. There is no time to say, "please cast off this," or, "Please make this fast." The politeness is understood and throw out the rudeness. But everything I say I mean absolutely and sincerely. Only do not be offended by the fact that I have to be tough and say it in a hurry.

Best regards to yourself and to Dudley Nichols. Yours always,
(Signed) Ernest (Hemingway)

cc: Dudley Nichols, Mr. Selznick, File

Finca Vigia San Francisco de Paula Cuba
April 21, 1942

Dear Donald:

Have just received your wire and am rushing comments on Dudley's script from page 157 on. There is probably not much that I can do about the El Sordo fight as I understand all that has already been shot. So I will not tear it down but will only make a few corrections on obvious errors which would be damaging to the film in Latin

American countries or anywhere people understand anything about Spain and Spaniards.

On page 163, can't the long moustachios be removed from this man? They have long moustachios on Italians but never on Spaniards. It is an absolutely phoney touch. As phoney as calling one of the men in Sordo's band, Rinaldo, which I have already written about. Rinaldo is an Italian name and is not Spanish.

On page 165, he should say "That's our comrade, El Sordo." Not "Our friend."

On page 170, why must Dudley make the boy Joaquin feeble-minded? Of course, he kn[e]w they would attack with planes. Hadn't he seen the planes of the day before? I hope in the cutting Dudley will eliminate some of the awful talky-talky about death and dying that has been put into the mouths of the characters. People can have thoughts in their heads but no one talks that phoney poetry about dying, that he has put in their mouths. It is really ghastly stuff.

On page 172, why does he have Jordan coming back from his defensive position, disarming himself and the camp to come back down to the cave, while the Sordo fight is still going on? This is nonsense, kills the suspense of that fight, and will be ridiculous to anyone seeing the picture. Remember this picture is being made in war time and will be seen by people who are war minded, and it cannot have muzzy thinking and construction in it.

Sequence F is almost the worst thing so far in the script. In it Dudley manages to lose all the suspense and all the tension which in the book is maintained steadily until the blowing of the bridge. He does this by a mishandling of the whole progress of the action after Sordo's command is destroyed on the hill. When he reads it over, I am sure he will see how wrong the structure is and how the suspense is lost.

Until I reach that point, will note various things wrong on the way. On page 190 Jordan bawling out the Gypsy for taking the wrist watch is absolutely phoney. All people in all armies loot the enemy dead and Jordan in the position he is in would never be such a silly prig as to bawl out the Gypsy for taking a wrist watch off the dead cavalryman. What does Dudley think Jordan would want done with the wrist watch? Bury it with the body or send it to the boy's dead mother or his sweetheart or what? If there was a wrist watch on the body, it belonged to the first person who found it. It is a lack of understanding of such things which makes phoney scenes; and

phoney sequences make a phoney picture.

On page 191, Dudley has Jordan say “the dead cavalryman is from Tafalla.” This is a town in Navarre in northern Spain where the people are fanatical Carlists. Navarre produced some of Franco’s finest troops and best fighters. It is a symbol of the fanatical troops on Franco’s side. Dudley then has Maria say that Joaquin comes from that same town. This is an impossibility, because Joaquin is a boy from Valladolid, a town where there were many Republicans who were butchered at the start of the war. If Joaquin would have come from Tafalla, he would have been a Carlist and fighting on Franco’s side. This is the sort of thing which seems unimportant to anyone not knowing Spain, but would make the picture ridiculous to a Latin American audience.

On page 192, he makes Jordan into a prig again with the gypsy over the business of the letters. There is plenty of opportunity for business between Jordan and the Gypsy without this priggishness.

It is on this same page that Pablo comes in from having found the bodies and Dudley’s construction goes all to pieces. The whole point about Pablo is that he is a man who is frightened and actually this business of Sordo being killed, and the heads cut off, really comes to him with such a terrible shock that he deserts that night, on account of it. But Dudley brings him in, high spirited, jovial, and absolutely untouched by the terrible thing which has happened on the top of that hill. All of that, on page 193, is completely false and phoney and destroys the character of Pablo and the structure of the picture. Why in God’s name not tell the thing visually, and have Anselmo watching the troops ride down with the officers['] bodies lashed over the horses, as what is left of Berrendo’s command rides along the dusty road into Segovia? And then Anselmo coming onto the hill, instead of this phoney business of Pablo rushing in in that preposterous way? What in the hell is the matter with the way that sequence is handled in chapter 29 of the book? When Dudley improves something, okay; but when because he was tired or not feeling so good that day he makes an absolutely silly sequence, it is bloody awful. For instance, it is obvious that Berrendo would take Sordo’s machine gun in with him. Remember he is the only officer left out of those sent out on that mission. He has plenty of explanations that he will have to make and he’s got to bring in something concrete to justify his losses. That is the reason for the heads business and it is nonsense to have Pablo make that speech at the

bottom of page 193, about the gun. When I suggest that Dudley read Chapter 29 for the handling of this whole sequence, it is not a case of the author thinking that no changes can be made in his work. It is just that he gets his own changed version into a childish jam, which absolutely distorts the character of Pablo and by sending the man off to Golz seemingly sure that the attack will be called off, he loses his suspense then and there.

On page 196, where Jordan says “you’re crazy with the heat,”!! I thought that phrase had gone out of use along with “Twenty-three Skiddoo.” The whole conception and movement is falsified by Dudley’s handling of this situation. Jordan would naturally take steps instantly to send someone to Golz to warn him of the preparations to meet the attack, indicated by the movement on the road. That is why his conversation with Pilar on page 199 is so phoney. For God’s sake, get Dudley to read chapter 29 on this. And on the rest of that sequence. It is a really terrible sequence. I am not being paid to rewrite it, or I could rewrite the whole thing. What I am trying to do is indicate to Dudley where he has done it wrongly.

Will rush you the rest of it tomorrow. Dictated this to Marty. As before excuse any rudeness; tell Dudley that too.

(Signed) Ernest (Hemingway)

cc: Dudley Nichols, Mr. Selznick, Mr. Marcus, File

Finca Vigia San Francisco de Paula Cuba
April 21st

Dear Donald (Friede):

To continue on with Dudley’s script from page 205 Sequence “G”:

On page 206 at the bottom of the page Dudley says in an explanation “He looks off, not wanting to tell her the truth, that perhaps even Golz couldn’t stop it now; or perhaps Golz knows about the counter-attack and will make a holding attack; so many contingencies he knows as a soldier.

But NEVER has Dudley made this clear either in conversation or in action. How does he propose to translate this aside of his into film?

On 211 it should be Comrades instead of Friends. This should be changed throughout.

On same page instead of bomb it should be grenade.

It should be I'm a comrade of yours I tell you - not I'm a friend.

On page 215 after Maria's sentence "to make a gag." It should follow [""]Then they ran a clippers across my head.[""]

On the same page where it says "I stumbled over the barber lying dead in the doorway," it should continue "They had shot him because he belonged to a Union." Otherwise what was a dead barber doing in the doorway.

I will refrain as much as possible from commenting on the love talk between Jordan and Maria. There was human, believable, credible talk in the book that he could have taken. Instead he has written the most revolting slop I have ever read. I know that there are parts of the book which could not be screened but why make Jordan and the girl talk such utter worthless sickening, maudlin blah when there is real, tender and believable dialogue which could be used? Or does Dudley think he writes better dialogue than I do?

On page 218 he says Gomez still looks like a barber despite his uniform. This is incorrect. The man I had in mind had been a barber but was a fine looking soldier. He is in the Spanish Earth in the fighting inside the house and in another sequence where Republican soldiers are being shown how to take down and assemble a rifle. He is the officer who was doing that instruction.

Could Sam Wood be induced to look at the Spanish Earth to see what these people actually look like in order to avoid making the sort of fake Spaniards that appeared in *Blood and Sand*?

On page 223 you are liable to get a laugh with that The Earth moved -

Sequence H.

I already wrote you about the danger of using Andre Marty's name and suggested other names. If he doesn't sue Paramount it would be possible for his wife or his children to. Tell them to remember the Yousupoff (you spell it) suit and lay off of it. Also the man in question for dialogue purposes on page 224 is not a commandant. A look at the book will show you how to fix that.

Pages 227-228-229-230-231 are a part of the Jordan-Maria stuff I have objected to. It is not that it is changed. It is that it is no good.

If you would have fixed a deal for Dudley to come down here to work for awhile on this with me I could have fixed all the weak

places and he could have had all the credit. I don't want any credit. All I want is a good picture. And it is hell to see weak and inept spots that could be wonderful.

Where Dudley has done a marvelous job is in all the action in the actual bridge blowing and the fight at the roadmenders hut and the sawmill. All his work there is marvelous. Don't think that I do not appreciate fine and wonderful stuff just because I did not write it myself. But I do know bad stuff and all I can do is try to point out when it is bad. I could make it right.

On page 237 why not use the good, tender and practical stuff about how she would look after his pistol etc. that is in the book instead of this weak dilution?

On page 239 it should be Comrade Karkov—Comrade this—Comrade that.

On same page dialogue is false where Karkov says—Not a party member like you, etc. He would never possibly have said such a thing. Please ask Dudley to cut that out.

On 240 it is much stronger if Karkov says I hope all men will speak to me always. I come from Stalin. (Otherwise how did Karkov have any authority over Marty, a head political commissar.) The sentence "I am a journalist and am going to write about the activities of some of our political commissars" should go out. He would never have said such a thing. It is silly talk. Like the party member business.

On page 245—after Maria says Is there no other way to explode the charges? It is absolutely out of character of either Jordan or Cooper to say I've got to find a way! I've got to! If Golz attacks the bridge has got to go! That is cheap melodrama talk and spoken like a hysterical girl. Jordan would say Yes. Sure. There's a bad way. But I can do it. (Then thinking of Pablo) Oh that rotten filthy swine!

Maria: What is the way, Roberto?

Jordan: Shut up. I'm thinking of it now.

Then go into the hand grenade business as Dudley has it.

On page 250 Jordan's last speech is lousy. Do I have to write it?

On page 263 after Golz says Nous sommes foutus. Comme toujours. Oui. C'est dommage. Oui. It is absolutely necessary that after that his face should smile with pride, happiness and delight as he sees the planes coming on and he should say "But how it could have been! And how it will be some day!"

Without this the Golz business is weak instead of strong and all

the glory of the possibility of victory the reason for which Jordan is blowing the bridge is unexpressed.

On page 271 * There are no smoke puffs with modern rifles shooting smokeless powder. There are flashes. The smoke puffs are a hangover from Dudley's Indian fighting days.

On page 272. There is no slit in a tank through which the gypsy could insert a hand grenade. The way to work this business is to have the gypsy roll a grenade in under the tread[;] after the explosion when the tank is stalled he works in close beside it as Dudley has him doing for the grenade business and slams this bottle he has been carrying in his grenade bag alongside the slit in the turret. He lights the wick in the end of the bottle as he is crouched before he makes his rush. There is a sheet of flame when he smashes the bottle and the tank blazes.

You can write in how he prepared it before. It can be one of El Sordo's whiskey bottles and Fernando could get it filled with gasoline and used motor oil for him on one of his nightly trips into La Granja. Or he could have syphoned the gas out of a car at night in La Granja with a rubber tube. This bottle can be the gypsy's pride and secret for a long time. You can show him fooling with it and hiding it before the attack. He doesn't want anyone to know he has it because he is afraid he will not have nerve enough to ever use it.

On page 274 Fernando would say Comrades not Brothers.

On page 283 - Tank guns have semi-automatic fire - The shells are loaded in a clip in much the same style as for an anti-aircraft gun. So you had better check that reload business or I suppose it possibly could be an old enough style tank to get by with that. Otherwise it should be when they change clips.

If Dudley is convinced that it is better to have the girl going to America (impossible) rather than Madrid and that he can write a better farewell scene between Maria and Jordan tha[n] I can[,] there is nothing I can do about this part except protest. When you have something wonderful why do you have to change it for something silly just because you are paid to put the book into film? When you have something that is good and right and can be used why change it? He has done a wonderful job writing that action of the fight why not then leave something that is good and not ruin it. And please don't have Agustin on page 289 say With My Life - It is by saying something quiet in a case like that that you get dignity and pathos instead of 10 20 30 melodrama. Actually he would say something

quiet and each one would try to comfort the other. Not that awful "With My Life!" sort of craperoo.

Well will get this off now so as to get the practical observations to Dudley as quickly as possible.

What has happened to you all of a sudden that you can't write a letter.

(Signed) Ernest (Hemingway)

cc: Dudley Nichols, Mr. Selznick, Mr. Marcus, File

Finca Vigia San Francisco de Paula Cuba
August 13, 1942

Dear Donald:

I just got your letter today and am so happy to know that Bergman is to play the Maria. I see nothing about it in the papers, so will you please let me know the details. So far it seems so much too good to be true that I am afraid to count on it. It is so wonderful to think that Zorina, looking like a cross between Pavlova's legs mounted on an okay body with a dach[sh]und's face, will not be ruining that picture. There are always enough things against it when a man is directing who refuses to be told anything about how things actually should look, without inserting that combination.

I will be very happy to see Dudley's script and if there is anything I can do to help out, please let me know. The reason I had not written before was because we had come to sort of a dead-end matter. Because of having to make many points in a hurry I hope I was not offensive to Dudley. It is sort of like the old story of the man who took his bride out sailing and shouted to her, "Let go that sheet." She didn't let go of the rope and the cat boat turned over. Later on it turned out that the trouble was that he had not said, "Please." I did that work on Dudley's script under such a press of hurry that many times when I should have said please it was omitted. I know that looking back on it he will understand. I appreciate all the difficulties he works under.

When you get this will you please wire me so I will actually know that Bergman is to play the girl and will not be like the time

I thought we had won the lottery in Valencia and spent all the money before the official list came out.

The boys are here and send their best to you. Patrick says if you would come down here he would get drunk. He has only been drunk twice in his life and they were both when you were there.

Best always,

(signed) Ernest (Hemingway)

cc: Messrs. Selznick, Henigson, Marcus, Townsend, Ryan, Rose, Graybill, Howell, Powell, King, Donahue, Holbert, File.

We are struck first in these letters by the intensity of Hemingway's feelings. After reading Dudley Nichols's script, the novelist had reason to be angry about "fatal ignorance, bad writing and bad construction." He expressed more than a little annoyance at the politics of the Hollywood studio system, which prevented him from communicating directly with the filmmakers. And he was utterly disgusted by Friede's "piece of agent-ship" that obliged him to correct the flawed script, gratis, "as a protest against its ignorance and ineptness." But Hemingway's anger, we soon come to see, was no wild rage, but a calculated, disciplined, professional response to the adulteration of his work. And as the movie began to be shot, he rushed to save the story from being "sabotaged" by a multitude of technical errors, silly misunderstandings, and clumsy, stilted dialogue.

*His eye for detail was extraordinary. He feared that bad costuming might replicate "the ghastly falseness" of director Rouben Mamoulian's 1941 movie, *Blood and Sand*. He lamented the poor choice of fictional names, scoffed at Spaniards with long Italian mustaches, and labored to correct seemingly slight errors of fact, such as identifying the gypsy as a "trapper." And he worried, prudently, that the naming of real people, such as the French Communist Andre Marty, would open the studio (and himself) to a lawsuit. (The Youssopoff case, to which he referred, involved a Russian emigre couple, who saw themselves depicted in the 1932 MGM movie *Rasputin and the Empress*, and successfully sued the studio in England for defamation. This case led to the famous disclaimer "any resemblance to anyone living or dead is a coincidence." Hemingway had ignored the precedent in his novel, but perhaps feared now that the assets of a Hollywood studio added to*

his more meager estate might make a juicy legal target.) His later comment—“Dictated this to Marty”—refers, however, to another “Marty,” his wife Martha Gellhorn.

Amidst these many details, Hemingway attended to the political ramifications of his work. “There is a war on,” he asserted less than three months after Pearl Harbor. And “there are certain points about the Nichols script which are really dangerously bad from the standpoint of making a picture which will be useful to our country’s war effort at this time.” Was the novelist merely posturing? Did he really believe that a movie of a novel could affect the outcome of the war? From his home in Cuba, he identified the importance of winning Latin American audiences to the Allied cause.

Just five months earlier, Hemingway had joined the Dutch filmmaker Joris Ivens in producing the propaganda film *The Spanish Earth*, which he acknowledged in the second letter of April 21 to be the source of one of the characters in the novel. Yet American public opinion in 1937 remained sufficiently ambivalent about the Spanish civil war that Hemingway omitted the term *Fascist*, lest it provoke a zealous censor to ban the documentary movie. So, apparently, the original Hollywood treatment of *For Whom the Bell Tolls* by Louis Bromfield had perpetuated what Hemingway called a political limbo “and no one was to be offended in any way.” Now with the U.S. in the war, Hemingway rejects his former restraint. “Throughout the picture,” he advised, “the enemy should be called the *Fascists* and the Republic should be called the Republic.” No longer was it necessary “to muddle along in order to appease the enemies of our country,” among them socialite Jock Whitney and “his *Fascist*-inclined relatives.” Nor should Nichols hide behind the Spanish term *Falangist*—the Iberian version of “*Fascist*”—because few Americans would recognize the word, despite the incantations of Texas Representative Martin Dies’ House Committee on Un-American Activities.

Such proposals reflect a certain political agenda, but we should not miss Hemingway’s primary motive for correcting the ideological vocabulary. “The best thing” about his story, he averred, is that it shows “what men and women would die for...and know it is well for [them] to die.” That insight suggests a subtle convergence between the psychology of character and a particular historical circumstance, the intertwining of an individual and a moment in time. Hemingway’s novel had been criticized by the American

veterans of the Spanish civil war for distorting a certain historical "truth." In condemning Marty and the Communist leadership, in depicting the savage execution of Spanish elites by vengeful peasants, in elaborating the romantic relationship between the American guerrilla fighter Robert Jordan and the female victim of fascism, Maria—the novelist, so charged the veterans of the Lincoln Brigade, had distracted attention from the more systematic evil of Fascist atrocities.

Here, however, Hemingway showed a deeper understanding of the aversion to fascism as "the animating motif for the whole band" of resistance fighters. Similarly, he explained, the victims of peasant rage need to be identified as the Fascists they were, because otherwise "the whole killing is a meaningless butchery." In this way, the hatred of fascism and the passion for the Republic serve two purposes: providing a political rationale for the war and the emotional reality that motivates action. "Remember," Hemingway concluded, "this picture is being made in wartime and will be seen by people who are war minded, it cannot have muzzy thinking and construction in it."

Hemingway's last missive refers to the abrupt change in the film's cast. Although the novelist strongly favored Gary Cooper playing the role of Robert Jordan, he cringed at the studio's choice of Vera Zorina, a dancer, to play Maria. Donald Friede persuaded David Selznick to interview Ingrid Bergman for the part, and Hemingway enthusiastically endorsed the change. "She should be marvelous in the role," he exclaimed.

To his editor Maxwell Perkins, Hemingway described the many changes he had recommended to Dudley Nichols. "In the end he rewrote it," the novelist stated, "and incorporated almost everything that I had suggested." But after the movie premiered in New York on 10 July 1943, Perkins attended a screening and offered the author a mixed review. Hemingway replied that he hoped he would never have to see the damned film!