

# HEMINGWAY'S SPANISH CIVIL WAR DISPATCHES<sup>1</sup>

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THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR BEGAN ON 17–18 JULY, 1936 as a rebellion of generals against the Republic's electorally-restored left-leaning government. Hemingway held a deep love for Spain dating from his trips to the bullfights in the early 1920s. He finally made it to the war-torn country in March of 1937 to report on the war for the North American Newspaper Alliance (NANA), to assess the situation in his role as chairman of the ambulance corps committee of the pro-Republican American Friends of Spanish Democracy, to collaborate with Dutch filmmaker Joris Ivens on the pro-Republican documentary *The Spanish Earth*, and to pursue his fledgling love affair with Martha Gellhorn.

By war's end in April 1939, Hemingway would make four trips to Spain and write thirty-one dispatches for NANA (Watson 4).<sup>2</sup> The secondary sources habitually judge them inferior journalism. Carlos Baker in the first Hemingway biography, for example, complains that the dialogue was "so heavily stamped with personal mannerisms as to be of doubtful authenticity." Baker sees a "curious monotony in his stories of battles and bombardments," a gratuitous use of graphic imagery "to shock his readers," and "a note of triumphant boastfulness" in reporting proximity to danger. He also faults Hemingway for "often hint[ing] he was alone when in fact he was usually with Martha Gellhorn, Matthews, and Delmer." Hemingway lacked Dos Passos' "eye for telling details" and the "meticulous exactitude and inclusiveness that characterized the best work of Herbert Matthews and Sefton Delmer" (Baker 329).

Philip Knightley's *The First Casualty*, the standard history of war correspondence, paraphrases Baker but with a trouncing final judgment:

Hemingway's "performance as a war correspondent was abysmally bad." But Knightley goes beyond "technical" dissatisfaction to moral condemnation. Not just "unjustifiably optimistic"—an excusable offense—Hemingway's reporting was "unforgivable" in its "total failure to report the Communist persecution, imprisonment, and summary execution of 'untrustworthy elements' on the Republican side, when he knew this was happening and when disclosing it might well have prevented further horrors like this" (Knightley 231–32)<sup>3</sup>

Such criticisms in the final analysis might bear out. As Scott Donaldson writes, Hemingway advanced the Republican cause in his dispatches by eliciting "the deepest possible feelings of horror and of sympathy for the victims" of the Madrid bombardment; his "undue optimism" often "ignored Loyalist defeats and exaggerated the importance of its victories"; and "he repeatedly called attention to the participation of Italians and Germans on Franco's side" (426). It also served as a recruitment tool—Milton Wolff, for example, acknowledged the strong influence Hemingway's dispatches had on his decision to volunteer. Nevertheless, I think it a worthwhile exercise to attend a little more studiously to Hemingway's dispatches, their context, and their artistry. I don't necessarily intend to reverse the general opinion of the correspondence, only to achieve a better and more sympathetic understanding.

Herbert Matthews' reporting for the *New York Times* will serve as a convenient comparison for two reasons. First, because both Baker and Knightley use Matthews' journalism as the standard of excellence to pass judgment on Hemingway's; and second, because the two worked practically side-by-side, seeing and reporting on many of the same events. In fact so closely did they work together that NANA sometimes complained that the *Times* was not buying Hemingway's pieces because they resembled Matthews' (Donaldson 411, 420), and at one point Matthews' own editors at the *Times* suspected him of plagiarizing Hemingway. A note from Matthews' assigned editor Raymond McCaw provides, in two columns, seven quite similar passages from Hemingway's Aragon front dispatches of September 13 and 14 with Matthews' of September 14, with a penciled note at the bottom: "a deadly parallel if you ask me" (McCaw, Note). Edwin James, the managing editor and McCaw's boss, eventually agreed with Matthews' defense: "It is quite apparent that you did not file any duplicate of the Hemingway story, or vice versa. As I understand it, the similarity arose from the fact that you

both went to see the same show and saw it at the sametime [sic], under the same conditions" (James, Letter to Herbert).

Matthews' dispatches ring of Republican bias as much if not more than anything Hemingway ever filed. The *Times* received many letters to the editor complaining about Matthews' undisguised politics, which also gave serious concern to some of his editors. His description of the Republican May 1937 infighting in Barcelona is a striking example of how his news veered into propaganda and shows just how much he passed along the government's version of events. The government's "BLOODLESS TRIUMPH FOUGHT WITH RECOGNIZED WEAPONS OF DEMOCRACY" turned out to be blatantly false, as the government and the "COMMUNISTS [WHO] DISTINGUISHED THEMSELVES" resorted to violent suppression. His blaming the uprising on the anarchist CNT working as Franco operatives parrots the government's and the communist party's public position, even though both charges—that the anarchists precipitated the events and that they were under Nationalist direction—were also false. His dispatch's optimistic close also equivocates the political reality: "NEW GOVERNMENT HAS TAKEN POWER WHICH APPEARS TOVE CONFIDENCE VAST MAJORITY SPANIARDS IN LOYALIST TERRITORY AND TIS HOPED WILL GAIN EQUAL CONFIDENCE ABROAD STOP VIOLENCE AND REVOLUTION BEEN REPUDIATED AND NEW AND FAR HOPEFULLER PERIOD SEEMS BEGINNING" (McCaw, Letter to Edwin, 20 May 1937). The *Times*, knowing full well the one-sided coverage of a correspondent writing from one side of the conflict, had a reporter on both sides: Matthews with the Republicans, and William Carney with the Nationalists. They got their facts right (or wrong) as often as the other, their editors concluded (James, Letter to Bertrand); and they inspired about the same number of letters of complaint (James, Letter to M.B. Tenney).

Furthermore, Matthews' dispatches received a great deal of substantive editorial revisions. One of Matthews' Teruel reports had to be cut for length, as McCaw informed James: "This bird sent 2844 words on the same facts which Hemingway covered much better in less than half that number. I wonder if Matthews thinks the paper is thriving, and that cable tolls do not matter a damn. Of course, it had to be cut for space anyway." McCaw most likely refers here to Matthews' dispatch corresponding to Hemingway's "The Attack on Teruel" (McCaw, Letter to Edwin, 20 Dec. 1937), though Matthews' account of the fall of Teruel is also much longer (and more long-winded) than Hemingway's, and just as personal in terms of describing the dangers

he faced. Indeed its length allows him to share even more of the action he endured.

Raymond McCaw held a general professional disagreement with Matthews perhaps tainted with overzealousness. Whether a personal or political motive informed that disagreement can't be determined from the evidence I've seen. It is also clear that McCaw's charges bear some validity—that any responsible editor could have easily and reasonably taken issue where McCaw did. One of the more interesting examples concerns Matthews' piece on Guadalajara. Because he only saw evidence on Franco's side of Italian forces, he only reported on Italians. But the *Times* editors heard from other sources that German soldiers also participated in the March offensive. They thought it prudent, from this confusion, to change (nine times) "Italian" to "Rebel," "the foe," or "Insurgent." When Matthews saw the published piece he wrote a strenuous objection. In some instances the editors changed paraphrased quotations from his sources. One large paragraph omitted by the editors stressed the first-hand nature of the information, and Matthews underlines the key words: "All day, at every place we stopped and no matter whom we talked to or what we saw, there was only one label—Italian. The dead bodies, the prisoners, the material of every kind, the men who had occupied Brihuega and then fled were Italian and nothing but Italian." Here and elsewhere in his original story, Matthews emphasizes the "personal knowledge" of its information (Letter to Edwin, 11 April 1937).<sup>4</sup> Yet Matthews did not report on the foreigners fighting for the Republic—it was in fact the Italian Garibaldi Battalion that routed Franco's Italians. We might surmise government censorship behind this silence, though Matthews would not cable news of "CENSORSHIP STRICTER" (Matthews, Letter to Edwin, 6 July 1937) and "BAN ON MENTIONING INTERNATIONALS INCLUDING AMERICANS INSTITUTED TODAY" until July (Matthews, Letter to Edwin, July 1937). Perhaps he cautiously self-censored, or politically self-censored for the same reasons the government would eventually ban mention. Still, his stridency about the omission of foreigners on one side is striking given his knowledge of their contribution to the other side. For this reason too, and his omission of other nationalities on the insurgent side, it seemed only fair to his editor "to stand on the statement that the majority of the Rebels were Italians and let it go at that" (James, Letter to Sulzberger). A reasonable decision.

Throughout his correspondence to his editors and his several books,

Matthews maintained a passionate defense of his eyewitness journalistic standard, a position those close to him understood. "Matthews never believed anything he had not seen with his own eyes," Joris Ivens wrote. "He never saw his job as reporter as one that permitted him to sit in his hotel and read the handouts of the War Ministry" (Ivens 112). Sidney Franklin recalls that some writers wrote their pieces before arriving in Madrid, and came only for the "legitimacy" of the Madrid dateline (232). And Matthews hated, on principle, having his name attached to an article that violated the integrity of his witness. The only way to achieve objectivity, for Matthews, was to acknowledge one's subjective perspective. Writing to his publisher, Matthews argued that "the full documentary value" of his coverage was lost when the editors altered his submissions for "the apparent necessity of giving more or less equal space to both sides" (Letter to Sulzberger).

As with Matthews, so too Hemingway. Indeed the commitment to subjectivity fit quite well with Hemingway's modernist aesthetics. If Hemingway focused the dispatches on his perspective—on his own experience dodging artillery—more than Matthews and more than most, he did so at least partially to fulfill expectations. NANA approached him, after all, for his name and personality as much as whatever he would write. Before he even left the states it pitched him to potential publications, sending out a promotional release with text to be used alongside his forthcoming dispatches and suggesting they include a photograph: "Mr. Hemingway's assignment is to get both from the bombed towns and bombed trenches the human story of the war, not just an account of the game being played by general staffs with pins and a map" (NANA, "Hemingway"). NANA also released each individual dispatch with a one-sentence "precede" about the "famous" or "noted" author. Ernest Hemingway was not writing as Herbert Matthews, ace reporter; Hemingway was writing as Ernest Hemingway, famous author of novels and stories well known to be drawn from his own experiences.

That he understood this to be his assignment is further evidenced by a cable Matthews sent to his *Times* editors on April 9, 1937, concerning the Loyalist attack: "WORKED CONJOINTL WITH HEMINGWAY TODAY HE SENDING EYE-WITNESS DESCRIPTION WHILE EYE SENT GENERAL STRATEGY" (Letter to Edwin). When a year later the *Times* asked NANA to ensure Hemingway's reports differed from Matthews, NANA complied by asking Hemingway "to emphasize color rather than straight reporting" not necessarily out of dissatisfaction with Hemingway's reportage as Baker contends (329),<sup>5</sup> but to increase

the chance of selling to the *Times* and indeed to ensure the spirit of NANA's original arrangement with Hemingway. Far from dissatisfied, NANA wrote Hemingway at the end of August 1938 a letter of agreement for his coverage of "a general European war" should it break out, "written in your colorful style" (Hemingway was in Paris, on his way to Spain for the last time during the war) (Wheeler). When Edmund Wilson criticized the selected dispatches reprinted in *Fact*, Hemingway wrote him that "I was paid to write what are called 'eye witness' accounts . . . what is called, or was asked for as 'color stuff.' Most of such stuff is faked. Mine was not. It was straight reporting and the personal stuff was what had been asked for by the editors." Wilson's estimation was also based upon *Fact's* inclusion of the "The Old Man at the Bridge" story from *Ken*, "not a news dispatch" at all (Hemingway, Letter to Edmund). Speaking at Carnegie Hall before the showing of a rough cut of *The Spanish Earth*, shortly after his first trip to Spain and so very much in the context of his wartime work, Hemingway defined the writer's problem as "project[ing] [what is true] in such a way that it becomes a part of the experience of the person who reads it" (Hemingway, "Fascism" 193).

Personal, anecdotal journalism had been Hemingway's signature style from his earliest days filing reports, in the early 1920s from Paris, when his editor at the *Toronto Star Weekly* "encouraged [. . .] what Hemingway did best: write about himself in the act of being a reporter" (Reynolds 45). How could he expect that NANA would expect anything else, if indeed NANA did expect anything else? In the Spanish Civil War he at least maintained his eye-witness posture; in World War II, however, he couldn't keep himself out. His first piece, about D-Day, begins, "No one remembers the date of the Battle of Shiloh. But the day *we took* Fox Green beach was the sixth of June, and the wind was blowing hard out of the northwest" (Hemingway, *By-Line* 340, emphasis added). His venue too—*Collier's* magazine—and the fact that he had not written anything in three years further contributed to the story-like nature of the WWII stories, in which he figured as a protagonist—not to mention the stories and involvement he couldn't write about, armed and running around France more of a free agent than his guerilla-hero Robert Jordan ever was (though he began to transform these experiences into fiction in several unpublished stories). In wartime China in 1943, filing articles for Ralph Ingersoll's short-lived *PM* New York afternoon daily, Hemingway did not even care to be called a news reporter (Moreira 99).

It should be mentioned that Hemingway and Matthews enjoyed a great

friendship and working relationship. Hemingway usually brought Matthews, who did not have a car, on his excursions. When Matthews left Madrid for a break in mid April 1937, he had already ensured Hemingway would provide coverage to the *Times* through NANA. For one thing, Hemingway did not have to worry about Matthews as a rival for the history books. He could endorse his friends' book, *Two Wars and More to Come*, and praise him as "the ablest and the bravest war correspondent writing today" who "when the fakers are all dead [...] will be read in the schools" (Advertisement 21) because Matthews posed no threat to Hemingway's own chances to be read in the schools. The only brief Hemingway ever expressed he really reserved for Matthews' editors, for not wanting his Teruel street-fighting story and for cutting references to himself in Matthews' Teruel dispatches so that it appeared only Matthews had been there ("To Hadley" 462).

As for Hemingway's neglecting to name everyone with him for every story, the *Times* cutting of his name suggests that such exactitude was hardly a priority. A paper had no incentive for announcing the fact that a competitor's correspondent stood beside its own to see and report the same events. NANA changed at least one vague Hemingway "we," which admits to the presence of others, to "this correspondent" (NANA, "American Veterans")—we can hardly fault Hemingway for working in the spirit of his employer's standards.<sup>6</sup> Do readers care that Matthews, Delmer, Gellhorn, and others were there? The story's effect and the limited word count also weighed against such roll calls. One editor chose not to clutter the dispatch on the great retreat across the Ebro with all the names of the American International Brigade volunteers Hemingway encountered, an omission of content more far serious than that of omitted correspondent names.<sup>7</sup> Hemingway often gave the names of the reporters with him, such as at Teruel; nor was he the only reporter to sometimes neglect to do so. Martha Gellhorn, for example, used a vague "we" and singled herself out as the primary participant in some of her stories.

By using first-person reportage Hemingway—and Matthews and Gellhorn and most of the group covering the war—were operating solidly within convention. William Stott, in *Documentary Expression and Thirties America*, calls this first-person *participant observer* technique "the most common sort of documentary reportage in the thirties" that worked "by vicarious persuasion: the writer partook of the events he reported and bared his feelings and attitudes to influence the reader's own" (178–9).<sup>8</sup> Stott also observes

another technique to enable documentary reportage to “talk to us, and convince us that we, our deepest interests, are engaged,” in the use of the second person: “Thirties documentaries constantly address ‘you,’ the ‘you’ who is we the audience, and exhorts, wheedles, begs us to identify, pity, participate.” His examples include Dorothy Parker’s Spanish Civil War writing, and Hemingway’s 1935 “First-Hand Report on the Florida Hurricane” (27–8). A number of Hemingway’s NANA dispatches employ the second-person as a way of bringing the reader along for the ride.

Hemingway’s dispatches used personal pronouns more artfully than is generally recognized. “A New Kind of War,” which William Braasch Watson notes as having been “[w]ritten with more care and imagination” than its predecessors (29), begins in second person: “The window of the hotel is open and, as you lie in bed, you hear the firing in the front line seventeen blocks away.” He takes “you” outside, to see the damage and the dead from the bombing. “Someone makes a joke about missing teeth and someone else says not to make that joke. And everyone has the feeling that characterizes war. It wasn’t me, see? It wasn’t me” (30). The tension between the first-person and second-person pronouns—the movement toward identification with “you” and the insistence that “it wasn’t me”—continues in the next line. Here the reader is at once still in the narrator’s shoes, but strangely distanced from the narrator through biographical tidbit and, at the same time, asked to see himself in the enemy: “The Italian dead up on the Guadalajara weren’t you although Italian dead, because of where you had spent your boyhood, always seemed, still, like Our Dead” (30). It is worth quoting at length the dispatch’s transition to first person:

After the shell that lit on the sidewalk in front of the hotel you got a beautiful double corner room on that side, twice the size of the one you’d had, for less than a dollar. It wasn’t me they killed. See? No. Not me. It wasn’t me anymore.

Then in a hospital given by the American Friends of Spanish Democracy located out behind the Morata front along the road to Valencia they said, “Raven wants to see you.”

“Do I know him?”

“I don’t think so,” they said. “But he wants to see you.”

“Where is he?”

“Upstairs.”

In the room upstairs they are giving a blood transfusion to a man with a very gray face who lay on a cot with his arm out looking away from the gurgling bottle and moaning in a very impersonal way. He moaned mechanically and at regular intervals and it did not seem to be him that made the sound. His lips did not move.

“Where’s Raven?” I asked.

“I’m here,” said Raven. (31)

The piece simply could not have sustained the second-person for the remaining five pages. More significantly, for this deeply personal exchange between the writer and the faceless, eyeless soldier, Hemingway could not hide in the rhetorical device of the second-person. In the process, he effects a reversal of the usual pronoun game; instead of identifying with the all-embracing “you,” we leave that trick behind and become fully attached to the narratorial “I” as ourselves, as we might not have been had the article begun in the first person. And even as the narrator identifies himself by name for the only time in any of the dispatches—“Hemingway,” and later “Ernest”—as decidedly not ourselves. We do not say, *It isn’t me*. The historian Hugh Thomas notes “the refreshing candour” of Hemingway’s naming himself “in the world of the International Brigades, where no one’s name seemed to be truthfully given” (591).<sup>9</sup>

A year later Hemingway’s “Tortosa Calmly Awaits Assault” resists admitting the city’s imminent fall. Yet it does so anyway, by subtly alluding to the wartime rhetoric of sacrificed blood irrigating the earth and rejuvenating Spain. Such rhetoric was common during the war, appearing in speeches, print, and poetry. Many of the poems in Cary Nelson’s anthology *The Wound and the Dream: Sixty Years of American Poems about the Civil War* join in the Spanish and international chorus’s general connection between Republican soldiers and the land, and the particular singing of their dead nourishing the land. We find such language in La Pasionaria’s farewell address to the International Brigades, her epilogue to *The Book of the XV Brigade*, and Hemingway’s famous eulogy “On the American Dead in Spain”: “For our dead are a part of the earth of Spain now and the earth of Spain can never die. Each winter it will seem to die and each spring it will come alive again. Our dead will live with it forever” (3).<sup>10</sup> The Tortosa dispatch implies the deaths of

many Republican soldiers in its final paragraph's description of the newborn onions:

The artillery was picking up a little now. Two came in at a fairly useful place and as the smoke blew away ahead and settled through the trees, you picked an armful of spring onions from a field beside the trail that led to the Tortosa road. They were the first onions of the spring and peeling one I found they were plump white and not too strong. The Ebro Delta has a fine rich land, and where the onions grow, tomorrow will be a battle. (Watson 84)

The echo is quiet, and perhaps unconscious, but there nevertheless.

The opening boastfulness of "American Veterans Tell of Escaping Insurgents" should be taken somewhat ironically. The dispatch begins by announcing that for "two days we have been doing the most dangerous thing you can do in this war. That is keep close behind an unstabilized line where the enemy are attacking with mechanized forces." Then, a few pages later, we learn about the Abraham Lincoln Brigade survivors of the spring 1938 Nationalist offensive that took Bob Merriman and eventually reached the Mediterranean Sea. Reading about these survivors creeping through enemy camps, stepping on a sleeping German soldier's hand, sprinting "across an open field toward the Ebro bank and being sniped at by artillery controlled by an observation plane overhead" and then "the desperate swimming of the Ebro" naked, we are asked to place the correspondent's plight in due perspective (Watson 71–2). This story certainly escapes the charge of a monotonous battle and bombing scene; its switch from apparently boastful to awe-struck witness feels almost deliberately self-conscious. Other choice self-ironic moments come in the dispatches of that pre-Teruel quiet fall of 1938. The one titled "Hemingway, Covering War, Tells of Brush with Death" has little to report from Madrid other than the new aftershave brand he is trying. In "Loyalists' Drive Seen Progressing as Planned," he writes that "Shells are all much the same and if they don't hit you there is no story and if they do you won't have to write it" (Watson 58).

Hemingway's dispatches are sometimes monotonous because his war was usually monotonous—as wars are most of the time. It should also be kept in mind that scholars reviewing Hemingway's NANA dispatches one after

another do not relive the original reading experience. Hemingway wrote dispatches sporadically, papers did not run all of his dispatches, papers edited and cut them, and readers read at least a couple of papers' worth of other articles in between. He told Edmund Wilson as much in defending himself against Wilson's critique of the selected (and heavily edited and cut) dispatches reprinted in *Fact* without his consent: "If you are being paid to be shot at and write about it you are supposed to mention the shooting. [...] But I do not go in for re-printing journalism" (Hemingway, Letter to Edmund).

If we can in this way better understand his style, and at least explain it if not excuse it, we similarly ought to try to contextualize—and perhaps excuse—the moral problem. The two issues here are the specific condemnation of Hemingway's silence about Republican atrocities and the general question of biased reporting (the latter of which has already partially been addressed).

Hemingway knew, as Donaldson writes, that mentioning the atrocities "would arouse anticommunist sentiments back in the States and effectively undermine any possibility of American intervention" (394). It is also doubtful that reporting them would have stopped them. But reporting Republican atrocities from Spain was not possible for the simple reason that all dispatches went through a government censor. Matthews cabled his editors from Paris in May 1937 to tell them that "censorship does not permit us to say when the 'telefonica' is hit. So whenever you see reference in my despatches [sic] to 'an important building in the center of the city' or words to that effect, the cable desk can know that it is the telefonica" (Letter to Edwin, 8 May 1937). As already noted, by July he would cable "CENSORSHIP STRICTER" as the ban on mentioning internationals went into effect (Letter to Edwin, 6 July 1937; Letter to Edwin, July 1937). Cowles' memoir confirms the aggressive censorship, observing that it limited journalists to exactly the kind of material Hemingway wrote about:

There were frequent attempts to "beat the censor" by employing American slang expressions, but this came to an end when a Canadian girl joined the staff. The International Brigades were not allowed to be publicized; no reference could be made to Russian armaments, and buildings and streets which suffered bombardments could not be identified.

It was only in the realm of the human interest story that the journalists had a free hand. They could describe bombardments to their heart's content. (20)

Hemingway and everyone else—to reserve incrimination for Hemingway is hardly just. No correspondent covering Republican Spain reported suspicious imprisonments and disappearances by government agents.

Hemingway, through Joris Ivens and *The Spanish Earth* project, had better access to officials than most. Had he been able somehow to report such activity, he would have lost that access and would probably have been kicked out of the country. His fame would have likely prevented his own officially sponsored disappearance, though he still worried, especially as so many of such crimes on the Republican side occurred from free agents. When Jasper Wood printed the anarchist F.A.I. banner in the limited edition book version of *The Spanish Earth*, Hemingway expressed his anxieties bluntly in a letter to Jasper on August 20, 1938. It is hardly “petulant,” he scolded, “not to wish to be shot” (Davison 128). Hostility in the Republic against the anarchists ran high; after the Barcelona May Day conflict, the government’s foreign minister told U.S. Ambassador Claude Bowers that “anarchist revolt throughout Catalonia and not only expected but welcomed as an opportunity to liquidate the anarchists who have been hostile from the beginning” (United States 292).<sup>11</sup>

It is possible that Hemingway’s dispatch stating that “not one friend [...] has been executed or is missing” (Watson 34) was his clever means of reporting the rumors and indeed the general fact while evading the censors, as in this very dispatch he acknowledged the presence of a censor after a bombardment. Matthews, on the other hand, never found a way to mention the censors or admit even the possibility of people gone missing in the Republic. Peter Moreira has observed that in a 1943 dispatch Hemingway related a remark by a British officer about the Chinese Nationalist government’s being “hopeless on the offensive” because censorship “prevented American reporters from actually saying that the Nationalists wouldn’t attack, surmising that by telling this anecdote Hemingway could sneak such a judgment into his reports” (77). In Spain, censors aside, the eyewitness standard and his own safety and continuing ability to report the war, and, yes, his passionate support of the government contributed to his decision. He could have written about government abuses from the states, but then could not return to

cover the war and support the cause—a justification other journalists, those who did not return after the spring of 1937, did not enjoy. In his mind too, knowing what he heard of fascist atrocities, any reportage against the government lessening its chances of victory through killing hopes of increased international aid would have led to more deaths at Franco's hands than the much smaller number inspired by fifth column paranoia.<sup>12</sup>

The accusation that Hemingway did not write about Republican atrocities because he was saving it for his fiction I find baseless (Knightley 232; Baker 402).<sup>13</sup> Carolyn Moorehead, in her biography of Martha Gellhorn, describes the climate for the Madrid correspondents that first spring: "And so, day by day, the correspondents walked a thin and nervous line between truth, evasions, and propaganda, telling one another that though it was not all right if things were made up and presented as true, it was acceptable to describe what you wanted, provided it was true and provided your readers were aware of your position" (125). My own sense is that they did not walk the line quite so nervously; their passionate commitment, and their principles of position disclosure and the eyewitness standard, made that walk relatively easy.

The problem of *committed journalism*, even sixty years later, has not been resolved—as anyone paying attention to the media and world affairs well knows. One person's truth is another person's propaganda. Certainly, as Knightley notes, reporting from "the heart" affects one's judgment (234–5). Yet to attempt "balance," per the edits to Matthews' Guadalajara piece, betrays one's believed truth. Furthermore, the kind of reporting done by the correspondents with the Republic—committed, one-sided, optimistic, heroic, human interest work by embedded writers—would be practiced widely and without reserve during World War II. Such narrative journalism, with roots in Louise May Alcott's "Hospital Sketches" series published in the *Boston Commonwealth*, and more immediately in 1930s social documentary writing whose "essence" is "not information" (Stott 11), anticipated postwar new journalism's adoption of novelistic narrative technique for nonfiction which culminated with such wartime books as Norman Mailer's *Armies of the Night* and Michael Herr's *Dispatches*. Some of Hemingway's NANA dispatches fall in this line of development.

Today we might categorize such writing under the awkward umbrella term *creative nonfiction*. That term certainly fits the mixed bag of nonfiction narratives and commentaries Hemingway published during the war in *Ken* magazine. These pieces are essays, not journalism, several of which

directly appeal for support for the Republic, and most of which really deal with the approaching world war. *Ken* wanted “precisely the kind of opinion articles he could not write for NANA” (Donaldson 433). His article, “The Cardinal Picks a Winner,” shows a photo of a row of dead children from Barcelona and another one with Nationalist officers saluting and Catholic officials with raised hands, apparently making the fascist salute as well. He ends ironically: “So I *don’t believe* the people shown in the photo can really be making it. I would rather prefer to think that the photograph was faked” (436). When Hemingway argues in “A Program for U.S. Realism” that the United States should stay out of the next war except to stuff its pockets through arms sales, one has to wonder, given his call and the democratic nations’ failure to save Spain, if we are to sniff sarcasm here.

The language of the dispatches, with their corrective intent against Franco’s propaganda, does risk propagandizing. Hemingway’s optimism and anti-fascism certainly colored his correspondence work. His criticism of the anarchist and POUM militia for their inactivity on the Aragon front, for example, sounds a lot like the Spanish Communist Party’s.<sup>14</sup> But unlike Matthews, Hemingway limited his reports within the Republic to military matters. Hemingway may have generally condemned the anarchists in his nonfiction, considering their activity as hampering the war effort, but he never repeated the accusation of their collaboration with the rebels, as Matthews had done. And when Hemingway commented on the Barcelona crisis, he referred only to the government—not the communists, as Matthews had done.<sup>15</sup> Nor did he write articles asserting the limited role of the communists in the government, or explaining Spanish anarchism, also as Matthews had done.<sup>16</sup>

During one of Hemingway’s stateside breaks between trips to Spain, his children asked if he was a “tool” of Stalin, an accusation tossed by a schoolmate who, presumably parroting his or her parents, probably understood the term no better than Hemingway’s children (Hemingway, “Home Front”). Hemingway believed in the Republic’s potential, but he was never a dupe of the Spanish Communist Party (PCE) or Comintern. As did many others, he accepted PCE’s presence in the government for its discipline and organization toward winning the war, and he understood the material necessity for Comintern’s support. It should also be noted, as historians Hugh Thomas and Helen Graham have reminded us, that the communism associated with the Republic wasn’t particularly communist anyway (Thomas 628; Graham

184). Hemingway declined to follow Joris Ivens' suggestion that he write a dispatch on the significant role of the political commissars in the Republican military (Ivens, Letter to Ernest), even though that would have meant featuring his brave new friend Gustav Regler. Hemingway also, in a letter justifying his work to Jack Wheeler at NANA, wrote about choosing not to send a dispatch he had written because it might strike readers as propaganda "no matter how true" (Letter to Jack Wheeler).

Hemingway went to Spain to see the war himself and to support the Republic through his ambulance fund. The paychecks from NANA and the fundraising from *The Spanish Earth* helped. Whatever propagandistic streak colors the dispatches pales in comparison to the documentary. The filmmaker, Joris Ivens, was well established in European communist circles. The documentary genre then and now has occupied a slippery position between the extremes of impossible-to-achieve empirical nonfiction and of the outright fictionalized. Evaluations of Hemingway's journalism are informed by knowledge of *The Spanish Earth* and the *Ken* essays to the detriment of the journalism. And the very nature of the slippery documentary genre may enable the film to escape opprobrium. It wasn't reportage; it was altogether something else. But for that matter, Hemingway's dispatches weren't purely reportage either, and if not *altogether* something else, still something else, and should be reckoned with accordingly.

#### NOTES

1. Adapted and printed with permission from *Hemingway's Second War: Bearing Witness to the Spanish Civil War*. Iowa City: U of Iowa Press, 2011.
2. Quotations from the NANA dispatches follow the Diplomatic Text established by William Braasch Watson's "Hemingway's Spanish Civil War Dispatches." I prefer NANA's titles rather than Watson's. For my disagreements with some of Watson's datings, see my comments on specific dispatches in *Hemingway's Second War*.
3. In my view, Knightley does not sufficiently acknowledge his paraphrasing of Baker.
4. James supported McCaw on these changes, though later acknowledged that altering quoted sources was perhaps unwarranted (29 April 1937; Herbert Matthews Collection, Box 1 Folder 3).
5. Baker's notes date the *Times* request to NANA as 8 Apr. 1938, and NANA's to Hemingway as 15 Apr. 1938 (Princeton University, Firestone Library: Box 18, Folder 8 "1938"), the date of "The Bombing of Tortosa" dispatch.
6. "we" in typescript and radiogram (Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, University of Texas-Austin: Ernest Hemingway Collection Box 1 Folder 1 and Folder 25).

7. Radiogram insert dateline 4 April 1938 (HRC: Ernest Hemingway Collection Box 1 Folder 25).
8. He specifically includes Hemingway et al (180).
9. For Watson, the dispatch “seems, in fact, on the verge of becoming a story” (29).
10. Reprinted in Brucoli 76 and Nelson, *Remembering* 37 (the drafts at the JFK are titled “The Dead at Jarama”). In addition to the poems in Nelson’s anthology, see the excerpt from Boris Todrin’s “Spanish Sowing” in Guttman (*Wounded* 179–180).
11. The Ambassador in Spain (Bowers), then in France, to the Secretary of State, 5 May 1937.
12. *Hemingway’s Second War* discusses in greater depth Hemingway’s politics and his falling out with John Dos Passos over the execution of José Robles.
13. Hemingway’s casual comment to colleagues calling dibs on Pepe Quintanilla, the executioner of Madrid, is not sufficient evidence.
14. It at least sounds almost exactly like Dolores Ibarruri in her memoir. To the anarchists’ complaint that they had no arms, she retorts “that they had more arms than did many other fronts. . . . What they didn’t have and what they were constantly demanding were airplanes and tanks. And they didn’t have them because the Republic government didn’t have them either, except for those it received as aid from the Soviet Union” (283–284). Yet the various Catalonia militia were not as well equipped with small arms as the more regular Popular Army units, and because of the terrain tanks and planes were in fact necessary.
15. Hemingway’s comments in “Hemingway, en Route Home Expects Loyalists to Win,” NANA staff correspondent dispatch. Though arguably he was propagandizing by hiding the communist influence—to mention the communists to an American audience would not gain sympathy for the cause.
16. An article on the communists’ limited role appeared in late November 1937, as discussed in a missive from The Ambassador in Spain (Bowers), then in France, to the Secretary of State on 2 Dec. 1937 (United States 461). Matthews’ “Anarchism: Spain’s Enigma” appeared in the *New York Times* 22 Aug. 1937: 6, 14.

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