

The Ex-pats Go to War: Hemingway, Paris and the Recovery of American Identity

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Abstract: We have chosen Hemingway as representative for the post-WWI generation of American ex-pats who found refuge in Paris in the 20s and the 30s, disillusioned with the immoral outcomes of the war. He found in pen an escape from that society in decline and from the horrors experienced first-hand; he created resistance to the establishment and social conventions on their typewriters as they felt they had no place within traditional society. Writing became a power; writing is an action, a doing; In a world where the action is necessary, the means to do so is writing. We follow the writer's search for identity, seen as a process of singularization based on recognizing that we share a common origin or circumstances with another person or community – the very community to which Gertrude Stein, F. Scott Fitzgerald, John Dos Passos, Sinclair Lewis, and Samuel Putnam belonged. None of them, at the time, would have imagined that the war was going to have such apocalyptic and catastrophic effects as it did. When the war ended, everything changed. However, those changes and life itself turn out to be as fleeting as the sunrise in Hemingway's novel. Having (re)discovered their identity in Paris, many of them returned to a more disappointing than expected America.

Keywords: America, exile, identity, Lost Generation, war.

1. Introduction: socio-cultural milieu

Literature opens the way to possible worlds that go beyond the majority discourse, possible worlds that, if not written, would be forgotten. More than a form of escape, literature can represent the unrepresentable. Some authors stand out through literary history as they take the reins of their generation to represent what does not appear in official history, in the history of the majority. It is a different conception from which the story takes place chronologically, from the official story where only the discourse and narration of the great characters are interested. The concept of official history has been widely studied and disputed by authors around the world. World War I ended and left a group of American writers coming of age to the ground. "A lost generation," as critic Gertrude Stein would call them, who were disillusioned with the amorality of the War. This generation of expatriates living in postwar Paris realized that the values instilled in them as children no longer had a place in this new society. Wandering, they went through the world for no apparent purpose. In this context, Ernest Hemingway wrote. Years later, when society began to recover, the Second World War broke out. With it, a new generation of writers put the conventions and values of society under scrutiny.

In the twenties, there was a proliferation of North American literature due to the need that writers felt to capture the experience they lived due to the Great War. It was an experience that, until now, had not been narrated in the great history books where the United States and half of Europe appeared as the great victors of the War and militants of democracy. Writers such as Ezra Pound, John Dos Passos, T.S. Eliot, and F. Scott Fitzgerald expressed their disillusionment with the world followed by the horrors of the said catastrophe. Ernest Hemingway experienced the atrocities of World War I firsthand by enlisting on the Italian front, where he drove ambulances. As a result of his experience, the author realized that words, like life itself, did not need to be full of ornaments or abstract language to establish meaning. So it was the Lost Generation.

Raymond Williams introduces us to the concept of the structure of feeling by defining it as "a specific structure of particular linkages, particular accentuations and deletions and, in what are often its most

recognizable forms, deep particular starting points, and conclusions” (*Marxism and literature*, 134). So these are emerging social changes that establish adequate limits on experience and action. It is the heartbeat of an era that does not necessarily have to do with the prevailing official discourse. It concerns the consequences of its living, of the experience of each social group. Hemingway introduces us to the structure of feelings of their generations that shared more similarities than differences.

On the one hand, Hemingway is one of those characters in history that is assimilated to those he narrates in some of his novels: he was a fan of boxing and fishing and bullfighting and was an avid hunter. Through the different works of Hemingway, we can realize what his life was like since the author includes biographical elements in his stories and novels. After the War, in 1921, the author moved to Paris, where he worked as a foreign correspondent and met Gertrude Stein and several expatriate writers and artists who arrived at La Ville Lumière. *The Sun Also Rises* summarizes the anguish suffered by the “lost generation” that survived the First World War. For Hemingway’s generation, the War was an unprecedented event, where it was necessary to participate for honor, nationalism, and defend the life they had enjoyed. As a good journalist, Hemingway could not miss the opportunity to enlist in the War. However, when he returned to the United States after the War, Hemingway did not feel at home since everything had changed. Like so many others, Hemingway had suffered immeasurable losses after the War, but the society that remained only wanted to forget what had happened and subsumed itself in parties, waste, adoration of new celebrities, and alcohol. Hence came his motivation to return to Europe, specifically to Paris, as an expatriate who would not have witnessed the decline of his society. As we will see later, Hemingway realized that life was not divided between good and evil, as reflected in his work. In *The Sun Also Rises*, Hemingway deals with the theme of War and how people live with themselves after it. What happened in the War was so tragic that only silence, the desire to forget, and alcohol survive, which is represented in all of his characters. Although the concept of the lost generation was a social and literary construct, elaborated by Gertrude Stein, the events narrated by these writers keep a stark correspondence with the reality, at the same time that they pose their distance from it.

Jake Barnes, the protagonist of *The Sun Also Rises*, and his friends are badly affected by the War, in one way or another, and Hemingway masterfully captures the anguish of the time. Pessimism, bewilderment, and a lack of beliefs characterized this lost generation where many resigned themselves to their destiny. However, Jake Barnes seems to be the only one who remains in the constant search for integrity in an immoral world, which is his primary purpose throughout the novel. However, as much as he searches for her, he cannot find her, and this is the confirmation of the anguish that Hemingway’s society suffers. When *The Sun Also Rises* is published, critics were finally able to name that hopeless spirit that fails to find integrity, the same spirit they had read in works like Elliot’s *The Waste Land*, *The Great Gatsby*, and *This Side of Paradise* by Fitzgerald.

2. Identity and the Lost Generation

Human beings are political animals; we are social beings who must live in the community. Since we are aware of ourselves, we are trying to find an identity: defining who we are, to which group we belong, and finding what makes us unique. The “I” is another: identity is necessarily going to be built in the opposition of the “I” to the Other. Being is something more than what is visible to the naked eye; it is indefinite and foreign. We are continuous beings and in constant search and movement. According to Stuart Hall, “identity is such a concept – operating ‘under erasure’ in the interval between reversal and emergence; an idea which cannot be thought in the old way, but without which certain key questions cannot be thought at all.” (2)

Thus, identity is a process of singularization based on the recognition that we share a common origin or circumstances with another person or community. It necessarily means that identities are built through difference. For Hall, identities are formed in “the process of becoming history, language, and culture,” and not to determine who we are but “what we might become, how we have been represented and how that bears on how we might represent ourselves” (4). Therefore, it is possible to affirm that identities are constructed given the narrativization of the “I”, of how we can represent ourselves within society. This process then comes from the search to build our own story and build an I and that identity. In the words of Hannah Arendt:

“With word and deed we insert ourselves into the human world, and this insertion is like a second birth, in which we confirm and take upon ourselves the naked fact of our original physical appearance. This insertion is not forced upon us by necessity, like labor, and it is not prompted by utility, like work. It may be stimulated by the presence of others whose company we may wish to join, but it is never conditioned by them; its impulse springs from the beginning which came into the world” (Arendt 176-177).

Once one’s own identity has been constructed, a group of individuals who share specific intrinsic characteristics that lead them to form a collective conscience is implicitly recognized. When these ties are so marked and exclusive, what we know as generation is reached. What constitutes a generation? The dividing line between one generation and another is generally blurred; it is impossible to say what date divides one segment of the population from the other. However, circumstances beyond our control sometimes influence and help create these dividing lines, as in the case of World Wars. There are events in which generations are even more divided than those named by demographics, such as the lost generation that emerged after WWI. From what we have seen, Hemingway’s generation is a product of WWI, just as Jack Kerouac’s generation, for example, is a product of WWII. These events helped forge these generational ties.

Identity is a crucial notion of understanding the phenomena that constitute a generation. As already mentioned, identity is a phenomenon of exclusion that separates us from a culturally established social group to create a subgroup with shared qualities and characteristics. In *The Sun Also Rises*, Hemingway shows us a world in which his characters undertake an incessant search to try to find and define themselves. In this novel, it is possible to notice a predominance of individual identity over national identity. In this sense, rather than wanting to be part of the society in which they live, the characters seek to find themselves through differences. The expatriation and self-exile experienced by Hemingway’s characters are presented as a condition common to the Great War. In some way, the writer is part of that community where he constantly questions the dominant society. In opposition to the national discourse, Hemingway is presented as an expatriate living in Paris.

However, it is not possible to analyze Hemingway’s novels without considering the context and the world wars that led to their production. The world war unleashed an economic, demographic, and social crisis that changed even the way people related. It left an active population completely unsupplied due to a large number of deaths that occurred, as well as a decrease in the birth rate due to the shortage of the young population that had gone to military service and did not return. In addition, it produced a complete distrust in the governments, given their participation in the war. These are general characteristics of a postwar society. However, in the United States, this crisis of confidence is even more pronounced since, technically, the country was not an active part of the conflicts as it was not geographically in the place where the war events took place until the government decided to participate in both conflicts.

The end of the First World War is also the emergence of the United States as a world power, which has continued to prevail over the years. When the First World War broke out, the United States declared its neutrality in the face of the conflict. However, the United States completely abandoned its neutrality in 1917 when Germany resumed attacking submarines and commercial ships of allied and neutral countries without prior warning, as happened with the RMS Lusitania in 1915. United to the events of the Russian Revolution, the then president American Woodrow Wilson, the so-called president of peace, unflinchingly leads the United States into the First World War with the pretense of ensuring democracy in the world. Given the deplorable conditions of the allied forces, the United States is forced to present more troops than anticipated. All men between the ages of 18 and 45 were eligible for recruitment. Among these, Ernest Hemingway and most of his friends from the lost generation are recruited. Thanks to vast American aid, the Allied forces defeat Germany, and the end of the First Great War comes on November 11, 1918. At the end of the war, the American armed forces were decimated with more than 53,000 combat deaths and more than 200,000 injured in just one year after participating in the conflict. While some will return from war with a feeling of satisfaction in victory, the lives of others will never be the same again.

In the 1920s, the Americans experienced the emergence of the Roaring Twenties, expressed by the new trend of consumerism product of advertising that needed to create new needs and the construction of skyscrapers, the flappers’ figure Charleston and jazz. However, for the most part, traditional society remained quite conservative while half the population was mired in poverty, segregation, and racism.

Technological changes led to a feeling of a new “modernity” and a complete break with tradition. It was a new world where it seemed that everything was possible: mass-produced cars, the telephone, aviation, cinema, and radio emerged, technologies that were essentially easily accessible to the entire population—the new world of adoration for new celebrities and athletes like Babe Ruth. The ornaments gave way to simplicity, both in dress and in the way of thinking. At this time, female sexual liberation began: not only did the way women dress and comb their hair, but they also began to use different forms of contraceptive methods that favor premarital sex. These female characters are found in literature in characters like Lady Brett Ashley from *The Sun Also Rises* and Daisy Buchanan from *The Great Gatsby*.

In post-War Paris, jazz was there to stay and try to forget all the memories of the war. However, this new aesthetic of representing the world was not accepted by everyone so plain and simple. Many of those who had suffered the war had come out of it with cynical and disillusioned thinking of the world; they resented society’s new individuality and materialism. They were the Lost Generation writers, as Gertrude Stein called them, most of them expatriates, who saw from the outside all these changes in society that did not seek more than to forget the war at all costs. Towards the end of one of his best-known novels, *This Side of Paradise* from 1920, F. Scott Fitzgerald writes that his generation had grown up to realize that all gods were dead.

But Hemingway never proclaimed himself a member of the lost generation. More appropriately, Stein used the term to refer to her expatriate literary friends who lived in Europe; she felt that those values they grew up with no longer made sense. Writers like Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot viewed with disappointment the new society that did nothing but adored the fantastic world that Fitzgerald illustrates in *The Great Gatsby* without stopping to question what was happening around him.

3. Discovering Europe, discovering oneself

The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas (1933) by Gertrude Stein remains our primary source for the author’s life in Europe.¹ Though partly set in Europe, Hemingway’s work does not contain any deep reflection on the old continent. Above all, it provided the author with places of inspiration such as Paris or Spain and participated in his literary creation process. *A Farewell to Arms* (1929) tells the story of Lieutenant Frederic Henry, a young American paramedic in the Italian army during World War I, who broke out while studying architecture in Rome. To the young English nurse who asks him why he got involved in a conflict that does not concern him, he replies that he has no real idea and that there is no “always an explanation for everything” (*A Farewell to Arms* 18). Frederic Henry is the very archetype of the American expatriate to Europe to escape conventional American life.

A Farewell to Arms (1929) begins in a light and positive atmosphere. If the Italian paramedics want to stop this war, Henry supports it and explains that it must not be stopped by the abandonment of one or the other army because “it would only be worse if we stopped fighting” (*Ibid.* 49). His friend, Doctor Rinaldi, is then a jovial seducer. However, unfortunately, Henry was wounded and taken away from the front by a long period of convalescence. When he returns, he finds an army in disarray and an exhausted and depressed Doctor Rinaldi. Responsible for bringing two ambulances to safety, he is taken for a deserter officer during Caporetto’s terrible retreat. Having escaped a summary execution, he decides to desert. Disgusted by the war and its absurdity, he cannot understand that the terms sacred, glorious, or sacrifice are applied to the butchery caused by the new weapons developed during the conflict.

The setting for the action of *The Garden of Eden* (1986), Hemingway’s last posthumously published novel, is also set in Europe. The author tells the story of two newlyweds, David, and Catherine Bourne, who

¹ On John Dos Passos and Ernest Hemingway’s connection with Spain and their relationship, we have found a great deal of information in various articles and books. First, a 1937 study, “Spain as seen by Some Contemporary American Writers” by John T. Reid, gave us some general information. Next, on the friendly and then stormy relationship between Dos Passos and Hemingway, we found Townsend Ludington’s article, “Spain and the Hemingway – Dos Passos Relationship” (1988), as well as *Farewell to Friendship. Hemingway, Dos Passos and the Spanish Civil War* (2005) by Stephen Koch. More specifically on John Dos Passos’ relationship to Spain, Donald Pizer’s article, “John Dos Passos’ ‘Rosinante to the Road Again’ and the Modernist Expatriate Imagination” (1997), provided us with a full explanation of this novel somewhat challenging to understand. Finally, regarding Hemingway’s experience in Spain, we found valuable information – sometimes contradictory – in David Sanders’ article, “Ernest Hemingway’s Spanish Civil War Experience” (1960), and Allen Josephs, *For Whom the Bell Tolls. Ernest Hemingway’s Undiscovered Country* (1994).

spent their honeymoon on the Riviera still untouched by mass tourism in the 1920s. They evolved around Le Grau du Roi, where “there was no casino and no entertainment except in the hottest months when people came to swim there was no one at the hotel” (*The Garden of Eden* 6). Spurred on by Catherine, they begin a dangerous game of gender and role reversal. They push back any moral limits and engage in a triangular relationship with young Marita until the destruction of their relationship and David's work by Catherine. As in *The Sun Also Rises* (1926), Hemingway portrays Americans – even sometimes English – who, freed from all conventional constraints thanks to the freedom offered to them by the old continent, lose the sense of moral values and go through a process of self-discovery.

Francis Scott Fitzgerald recounts an equally subtle disintegration of couple and individual in *Tender is the Night* (1934). The story is that of a handsome psychiatrist, Dick Diver, married to Nicole, a wealthy and attractive American with schizophrenia. After a new crisis of his wife, he abandons psychiatry to devote himself to his family and organizes a pleasant life between Paris and the Riviera. However, Diver is slowly drawn into the hectic life of Americans in Europe. Much like Hemingway's heroes, and like Fitzgerald himself, he loses his moral bearings and ends up losing control of his life, mainly affected by Nicole's schizophrenia attacks.

This novel contains many autobiographical elements relating to Fitzgerald's life with his wife Zelda in Paris, where they arrived early. They hope to live there more comfortably than in the United States by taking advantage of the devaluation of European currencies against the dollar. In addition, they flee the moral straitjacket of American society and enjoy the freedom they lack in the United States in Paris. In Paris, the Fitzgeralds meet Gerald and Sara Murphy, around whom revolve Hemingway, Picasso, Juan Gris, whose house Fitzgerald describes in Antibes in *Tender is the Night* (1934). In 1924, the writer and Zelda moved to Valescure, not far from Saint Raphael, where Fitzgerald wrote *The Great Gatsby* (1935). They returned to Paris in April 1925; at Gertrude Stein's cosmopolitan salon, they prefer the bars of Montparnasse and frequenting Americans and Anglo-Saxons, including Duff Twysden, who serves as a model for Brett Ashley's crazy character in Ernest Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises* (1926). In short, “the Fitzgeralds had recreated around them that sordid frenzy which they had fled when they emigrated” (Taylor 241).

The Fitzgeralds do not establish any contact with the French population and do not seem to have any interest in various European cultures, nor do they make an effort to learn French. Unlike Ernest Hemingway, according to Jeffrey Meyers, “they put very few French writers and ignored the avant-garde” (Meyers 110). They regularly frequent Negro cabarets run by African-Americans, such as the Bricktop's, at 53 rue Pigalle, which can be found in the background in various Fitzgerald short stories, including “Babylon Revisited” (1931). Joseph McMahon describes the life of the writer and his wife as that of Americans transplanted to a country they do not know, “living among other transplanted Americans, courting and then experiencing all the debility any transplant is liable to” (McMahon 149).

According to Gertrude Stein, France is a modern country, although modernity is not a sine qua non for life. Americans want to live in Paris, and more generally in France, because France “has scientific methods, machines, and electricity, but does not really believe that these things have anything to do with the real business of living” (Stein, *Paris, France* 8). Moreover, the author is convinced that the traditions of the French capital are sufficiently established to resist massive industrialization without being influenced. In addition, Stein, for whom “there is no pulse so sure of the state of a nation as its characteristic art product which has nothing to do with its material life” (*Ibid.* 12), is convinced that France cannot be only a second-rate nation when its artists and poets are at the forefront of the twentieth-century avant-garde.

In 1940, Gertrude Stein explains why Americans were so drawn to Paris: if the nineteenth century was the century of England, the twentieth century is that of Paris. Americans, who cannot find an environment conducive to creativity in an America dominated by modernity, choose to settle in Paris because “Paris was the place that suited those of us that were to create the twentieth-century art and literature, naturally enough” (*Ibid.*). Europe, even if some are lost in it, will have enabled an entire generation of writers to renew American literature.

4. The Sun Also Rises – when the expats go to War

Ernest Hemingway published his first novel, *The Sun Also Rises*, in 1926, which is about a group of American and British expatriates who travel from Paris to the San Fermín Festival in Pamplona to attend

bullfights. The novel has been considered a roman à clef since its main characters are partially based on friends and acquaintances of Hemingway and on events that supposedly happened to him. However, it should be clarified that the novel should not be taken as an autobiography of his friends' biography. In a letter to an editor at Rinehart & Company, Hemingway tells him that the idea for *The Sun Also Rises* arose from a war wound that resulted in a mild scrotal infection. As a result, he began to reflect on what his life would be like if he had to live without a penis for the rest of his existence. That is where the character of Jake Barnes came from, and in creating it, Hemingway tried to think what kind of problems this character could have who was in love with someone who was also in love with him, but there was nothing they could do about it.

Reading *The Sun Also Rises*, one has a feeling that there is not even a story to tell. There is no complex plot or extraordinary events that happen to the characters. Instead, we see an entire generation partying and drinking aimlessly through the streets of Paris and later in Pamplona. However, inadvertently, when the book ends, it masterfully delivers the story. Readers are left with visions of the book of things that the narrator barely describes and memories of the characters' powerful dialogues. Characters that Hemingway barely describes but who live intensely within the pages of the novel, such as Lady Brett Ashley, a perfect description of that postwar woman who only complains and has one cocktail after another without stopping to think about the consequences.

Continuing with this idea, with *The Sun Also Rises*, Hemingway introduces his concept of the iceberg theory. The writer omitted facts from the story so that the omissions would reinforce the narrative. The story's deeper meaning should not be apparent on its surface but should shine through by being implied. It is purifying language that cleans the prose and literary discourse of its predecessors. "Nothing is left but love for the night and our desire for purity" (Trogon, 216). Purity for what does not matter, for it is for what Hemingway incessantly seeks in all of his work. Hemingway's search for truth discussed in the introduction reflects this prose or his economy of language. This aesthetic of simplicity is necessary because for Hemingway, "style was a moral act, a desperate struggle for moral probity amid the confusions of the world and the slippery complexities of one's nature. To set things down simple and right is to hold a standard of rightness against a deceiving world" (Barrett 65). His particular style reflects a brutal honesty and moral responsibility that gives more meaning to what he describes than what he could add by filling sentences with ornaments. In fact, in the novel, the author never explicitly mentions Barnes's injury or its consequences, as we will see later. *The Sun Also Rises* has as main themes Paris and the lost generation, women, bullfights, nature, and masculinity. Today, this is considered by many to be Hemingway's best novel and the one that best defines what the postwar expatriate generation was like.

The Sun Also Rises begins with a passage from Ecclesiastes, which establishes an atmosphere of significance in the story's unfolding. The reader begins the novel convinced that he will deal with transcendental issues for that lost generation, of which he is warned in the second passage. However, instead of reading about these critical topics, we end up reading about seemingly unimportant events that occur around cafes and bars in Paris, American Paris: love affairs, bullfights, and lots of alcohol. From its publication, part of the critics praised the novel, considering that its narration perfectly captured this lost generation. In contrast, the other part, naturally, disdained it for its sad and empty characters that showed how society was at the time.

In *The Sun Also Rises*, Jake Barnes sums up his ex-pat experience in the simplest way: "Life was so simple in France. I felt I was a fool to be back in Spain" (210-211). This notion of simplicity conflicts with modernity, as it contradicts the current project that seeks utility above all things. The notion of simplicity has two anchors: life and France. The simple for Hemingway translates into an ordinary life where he should not blindly follow the national discourse; it seeks an order, which has nothing to do with the American order. When reading the novel's first lines, we cannot help but feel a theme of futility that permeates all things. Life remains the same; the sun rises every day in the same way, eternally. The narrator uses the word nightmare several times to describe the parties and outings of the characters. Once, after having a few drinks, Lady Brett Ashley confesses to Barnes: "I had the feeling as in a nightmare of it all being something repeated, something I had been through and that now I must go through again" (64). The San Fermín festival in Pamplona becomes an escape from the daily monotony where Hemingway explains that "the things that happened could only have happened during a fiesta" (142). The strangeness of the party made everything

unnatural, and nothing could have consequences. After so much searching at the party/carnival, they were finally free. However, even the party itself ended up being useless and purposeless. What surprised them at first, the place where everything was possible would be the same as everything else: “Outside in the square, the fiesta was going on. It did not mean anything” (201). Therefore, no matter whether they were inside or outside their homeland, the feeling of uselessness and nonsense would accompany these characters wherever they were. Ultimately, the narrator says that nothing mattered since “our stay on earth is not for long. Let us rejoice and believe and give thanks” (114). Ernest Hemingway’s style is such that it allows phrases like these, in the middle of a simple conversation that involves a lot, to go almost unnoticed.

Hemingway wrote about a society that had lost all hope or belief. In a letter to his mother, written a year after the book was published and dated 5 February 1927, the writer defends his choice of topic. Hemingway tells her mother that he had not been able to write to her regarding the novel *The Sun Also Rises* since he knew that she had not liked the book, because,

“The people I wrote of were certainly burned out, hollow and smashed – and that is the way I have attempted to show them. I am only ashamed of the book in whatever way it fails to really give the people I wished to present. I have a long life to write other books and the subjects will not always be the same – except as they will all, I hope, be human beings.” (*The Private Hemingway*, np)

Hemingway shows them as they are behind closed doors; he shows all the defects that society does not want to be seen or reflected in literature.

This is how Sara Lennox interprets the isolation of World War I society: “The isolation of the lost generation in *The Sun Also Rises* thus not only represents the failure of the society but, paradoxically, the fulfillment of certain tendencies implicit in it as well. [...] for Western civilization in the twentieth century, even love is no longer a solution to human estrangement” (Lennox 83). This idea is reflected in *The Sun Also Rises*. Even though the Great War has already ended, the battles now occur on an emotional level. There is a tension that everyone wants to ignore and forget, and alcohol would be the only remedy for this emotional emptiness: “It was like certain dinners I remember from the war. There was much wine, an ignored tension, and a feeling of things coming that you could not prevent happening. Under the wine I lost the disgusted feeling and was happy. It seemed they were all such nice people.” (*The Sun Also Rises* 135).

The protagonist of the novel, Jake Barnes, suffered an accident in the war. Following his iceberg theory, Hemingway never describes what happened to the character as he, as with everything related to war, never discusses the issue directly. Throughout the novel, certain clues allow us to understand that he became powerless as a result of his injury. It has an impact on the character feeling insecure about his masculinity. Jake Barnes is a perfect example of the men of the lost generation: he wanders all over Paris aimlessly and goes from bar to bar drinking the sorrows in alcohol, his life, for no apparent purpose. Furthermore, the incident made Lady Brett Ashley, the love of his life, decide that she cannot be with him because of his injury. It is never explicitly stated why the characters cannot be together, but Hemingway’s great prose allows us to intuit what happens. Jake has to suffer throughout the novel seeing all the suitors approaching Brett, and Brett goes from one failed relationship to another incessantly. Towards the end of the novel, Jake accepts that he will never have a happy ending with Brett and that all possibility is irrevocably lost. Thanks to his injury, the idea of having any romantic relationship with Brett is something of an impossible dream.

The epigraph of *The Sun Also Rises* frames ourselves in the concept of generation of both novels. Hemingway takes a passage from the Book of Ecclesiastes 1:4: “Generation goes, and generation comes, but the earth always remains.” This Old Testament passage reminds us that nature and the earth are constant while humans are not. Generations may come and go, but our time on earth is insignificant compared to the eternal motion of the planet, the rising and setting of the sun. The Book of Ecclesiastes is also known as the Book of the Preacher. The book begins with the spokesperson, who is tired of the dominant ideas and decides to speak. The preacher discusses the boredom and great disappointments of life, the individual’s place in society, and the dissatisfaction of love. The book has an existential tone as it asks how to face a life where the only sure thing is death. The postwar period offers, then, a world without guarantees other than death. If so, modernity is a mere illusion as it is not a guarantee. However, although the pleasures and efforts of men are ephemeral, the book invites us to enjoy life during the time that we will be in it. It seems to be

the central theme of *The Sun Also Rises*. The notion of the expatriate must be analyzed under this concept of modern life. For the traditional society, which went to work every day from dawn to dusk, this type of person had to be a ruinous being. They were merely drinking, obsessed with sex, not working but only hanging out in Parisian cafes. However, Hemingway vindicates these characters that, although they were not economically productive, they were the only ones who stopped to contemplate the changes in the world and society. They just wanted to be.

4. Identity re(dis)covered

Until World War I, the Americans traveled, searching for an ancient, poetic image of old Europe. Indeed, the old continent continues to appear to them corrupt morally, politically, and economically; Europe interests them only for its history, culture, and traditions, which they idealize to the point of seeing no future for it.

The Americans are changing their view of Europe at the start of the twentieth century. Gertrude Stein, based in Paris, forges special links with avant-garde artists; during World War I, she chose to stay in France and rescue American soldiers sent to Europe. At the same time, John Dos Passos discovered Spain, a country with deep-rooted traditions and still untouched by the massive industrialization that had invaded America and northern Europe. Ernest Hemingway, for his part, enlisted as an ambulance driver on the Italian front; after the war, he moved to Paris as a journalist. All three have the distinction of having privileged hitherto unrecognized corners of Europe; they learn their languages and customs and integrate into the population. In this, they behave contrary to their predecessors; therefore, their image of Europe is different.

Coming from the middle – if not relatively well-off – classes of the Midwest, these authors flee the materialism and massive industrialization that betray the traditional values of America. More than that, they are looking in Europe for the means to live the present to their complete convenience, far from conservative American values. While Paris inspires Gertrude Stein to modernize her writing, Dos Passos seeks in Spain a European population that is still traditional and anchored in the humanist values of the past. Hemingway, meanwhile, meets Gertrude Stein and her circle of artists, learns about French literature, and becomes fascinated by Spanish bullfights, the violence of which reminds him of the bitter fight waged by man in a hostile world.

Each interested in the country that captivates him the most, these authors do not have a comprehensive picture of Europe. Stein, who devoted an essay to France, Paris. She was fascinated by the rich French traditions, which seemed to her to be immutable but in no way prevented the country from being modern and from welcoming many avant-garde artists. Hemingway and Dos Passos oscillate between France and Spain, searching for the same traditions that still bind people to their land. In addition, they describe in their novels and travelogues the quest of all these young American expatriates seeking in Europe to give meaning to their lives. Even if Sinclair Lewis does not show the same modernity in his writings, he describes in his novel *Dodsworth* (1929) the tribulations of these well-off travelers from the Midwest. Its heroes find in Europe the freedom they have not experienced for a long time, a unique culture and traditions they lack in America.

A particular image of Europe looms in the writings of the Lost Generation authors, including Francis Scott Fitzgerald. The characters of *Tender is the Night* (1934), as the author, flee the heavy atmosphere of their country on an old continent ravaged by the First World War. Making no effort to integrate, they see in Europe only a land of all freedoms, where life is much more affordable than in America, without considering the difficult situation in which the European peoples of the interwar period. Hemingway's characters and those of John Dos Passos make an effort to take an interest in the countries they visit or in which they settle. They nevertheless flee their country.

Whether they were more or less concerned with the political, economic, and social situation in Europe, American writers expatriated in Europe during the Roaring Twenties found there the inspiration necessary for the renewal of the American literary tradition. Following the Great Depression, most of them will return to America, now ready to face their own country.

Samuel Putnam (1947) explains that the process of bringing him to accept the realities of life in America begins during his final years in France. He quotes excerpts from some of his letters to friends in America. Putnam explains that his perspective on his Americanness is different from what he had before his

European experience. He wrote to a relative of Cincinnatti that it would therefore be possible for both of them to protect themselves from insignificant pragmatic American activity, hoping that a new generation realized the importance of spiritual values without losing its essential Americanness. Because his most significant discovery in France, he continues, despite his cosmopolitan curiosity, is his American identity. He ends the choice of his extracts with the declaration that he does not wish to be uprooted entirely and therefore intends to return periodically to his native country while insisting on the fact that he will live and die as a cosmopolitan:

“Perhaps the greatest discovery I have made on this other continent is that I am, when all is said, an American hopelessly, irretrievably an American and by no means sorry for it. My Continental ‘period’ is past. My cosmopolitan curiosity I trust I shall never lose, for that is something that America needs. What I would do is, take all I can from all the world and bring it to America ! don't want to go to seed. Therefore, I think I shall come back to America for certain intervals .. I have no desire to be a *déraciné*. Not after inspecting from close up our local ‘exile’ colony. I don't think I ever could be one; but I shall live and die a cosmopolitan.”
(Putnam 246-247)

Putnam considers his spiritual values and cosmopolitan or internationalist sensibility to be the consequences of the experience of exile. It refers to the first advocate of mass expatriation, Harold Stearns, who believes, in response to novelist Sinclair Lewis, that even the less intelligent of those who participate benefit from the spiritual strengths of French life. Putnam establishes a similar observation concerning Mencken and Lewis when at the end of *Paris Was Our Mistress*, he wonders about the fruits of the expatriation experience harvested by his compatriots. He maintains that all expatriates have experienced the “spiritual strengths of French life” and that their discovery of the place of the United States in a global context gave them a picture of their country that writers such as Mencken and Lewis do not. could not offer them:

“Was the experience of ‘exile’ worthwhile? To us? To America? The answer to both questions is, I believe: Yes. As Harold Stearns put it in his reply to Sinclair Lewis: ‘The chief good point, of course, is that remotely, somehow, somewhere, even the dumbest of American expatriates have been touched by the spiritual forces of French life.’ And by something more, I would add, than French life: by the discovery, first, of a larger world, and then of the fact that America is a part of that world. Something that the Menckens and the Lewises never tried to teach us, the value of which may be plainly seen today in this age of atom bombs.” (*Ibid.* 253-254)

Putnam writes it is also a new social language that his recently repatriated compatriots are discovering. During the crisis, they face a kind of disillusion that hardly resembles that which some of them live during the conservative administration of the Republican President Warren Harding at the beginning of the Twenties. However, if during the first half of the decade, the middle class symbolizes a force which harms the progressive values dear, among others, to intellectuals, when the expatriates return to the country, they find an America angry, bitter, disappointed, cynical, and hardened who speaks of revolution even in the bars of the middle class.

5. Conclusion

The horrors of the First War subsumed all of humanity and, with it, came the financial crisis in the United States as well as the entry of criminal gangs and the professionalization of crime, in part thanks to the country's so-called Prohibition Law. Hemingway and the writers of his generation were pessimistic; they often voiced their opinion of the futility of war and their radical criticism of American society. As anticipated, it was a society that, for Hemingway and others of the generation, cynically sought to forget what had happened under new materialism, the search for novelty and individuality. In *The Sun Also Rises*, Hemingway manages to perfectly describe the atmosphere of Paris in the twenties, a setting conducive to presenting the moral bankruptcy suffered by the society where La Belle Epoque had been left behind. For Hemingway, the importance lay in telling and writing the truth of what he saw in order to arrive at his true identity: “‘All you have to do is write one true sentence. Write the truest sentence that you know.’ So finally,

I would write one true sentence and then go on from there. It was easy then because there was always one true sentence that I knew or had seen or had heard someone say” (Hemingway, *A Moveable Feast* 12).

The American writers who moved away physically from their society in Paris and spiritually back to the United States found their place in it during the 1930s. Their stay in Paris in 1920-1930 allowed them to train as writers outside their national society. They built their identity based on their difference as expatriates vis-à-vis the environment that surrounded them in Paris and around a protest discourse concerning their literature with colonial or provincial accents. Their literary identity is even formed in opposition sometimes to the values of this national society. However, the literature they produce in Paris, as Sinclair Lewis points out in his Nobel Prize speech, represents an essential contribution to the development of national American literature. The Parisian experience reveals to them that their popular and industrial culture and their geography can be valid models of artistic representation. In this sense, they are reconciled with the dominant manufacturing in American civilization, despised by many men of letters, from Henry James to Harold Stearns. However, the diversity of literary forms to which our authors are exposed in Paris shows them that they can shape their writings, as it suits them, objects from their culture.

From the nineteenth to the twentieth century, the constant image of Europe in American literature is that of an old continent at the source of all the artistic and historical references that Americans sorely lack. Over the decades, intellectuals have come to understand Europe differently, representing a land of perdition and refuge. Despite the threat it poses to American values, our old continent remains a land of diverse opposing cultures, picturesque landscapes, and ancestral customs. Long after America took over the world leadership, Americans still need Europe, where they know they are from. For American writers of the time, the image of Europe was neither political nor economic but literary and artistic. In a word, cultural.

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