

King Solomon, Gertrude Stein and Hemingway's 'Lost Generation'

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FROM its publication on 22 October 1926, readers of *The Sun Also Rises* have been guided — I would say misguided — by the first of the novel's two epigraphs: "You are all a lost generation" — Gertrude Stein in conversation.' As biographer James Mellow has written, 'Stein's remark proved very useful in the media, giving reviewers a convenient peg for their criticism' (308). Several early reviewers, including those of *The New York Times Book Review* and *Time* (Stephens 31, 35), fastened on the Stein statement as a key to understanding Hemingway's novel. Others picked up on its negative implications. The *Cincinnati Enquirer*, the first newspaper to review the novel, called it 'almost horrible in its depiction of futility' (qtd. in Stephens 31). The poet Conrad Aiken, writing in the *New York Herald Tribune*, described its characters as belonging 'to the curious and sad little world of disillusionment and aimless expatriates . . . ' (qtd. in Stephens 33). For the reviewer of the *Chicago Daily Tribune*, the characters are not merely lost and aimless, but 'utterly degraded people' as well (qtd. in Stephens 39).

In the ninety years since its publication, *The Sun Also Rises* has been frequently seen through the prism of an aimless lost generation. The back cover of the 2006 Scribner paperback edition described the novel as depicting 'an age of moral bankruptcy, spiritual dissolution, unrealized love, and vanishing illusions.' The jacket blurb of the 2014 Hemingway Library Edition of *The Sun Also Rises* calls it 'the quintessential story of the Lost Generation.' Although editor Seán Hemingway, Ernest's grandson, points out that Hemingway distanced himself from the Stein label in the posthumously published *A Moveable Feast*, he nevertheless sees its central characters as, if not quite degraded, then as certainly 'hollowed-out and emotionally exhausted' (xx). More recently, James M. Hutchisson has called *Sun* 'the quintessential novel of the "Lost Generation"' (75), a story of 'an entire generation, wandering without direction . . . , living, in sum, a rootless, largely purposeless existence' (77). Lesley M. M. Blume's *Everybody Behaves Badly: The True Story Behind Hemingway's Master-piece* [End Page 80] *The Sun Also Rises* has been marketed as depicting 'a morass of sexual rivalry, gory spectacle, brutal hangovers, and fisticuffs' — with its characters a 'tempestuous entourage,' all of them behaving badly. Hemingway is designated as 'the voice of his 'lost' generation' (Brochure 1-2).

Hemingway himself initially led his readers to take Stein's 'lost generation' tag and its applicability to the novel seriously — even if he may later have changed his mind. The first edition of *The Sun Also Rises* included, on a page of their own separated from both the novel's title and opening words, these two epigraphs printed in boldface:

'You are all a lost generation.'

— Gertrude Stein in conversation.

'Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity. . . One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh; but the earth abideth forever. . . The sun also ariseth, and the sun goeth down, and hasteth to the place where he arose. . . The wind goeth toward the south, and turneth about unto the north; it whirleth about continually, and the wind returneth again according to his circuits. . . All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea is not full; unto the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again.'

— Ecclesiastes.1

The Ecclesiastes epigraph, which is actually the second Biblical verse (the first verse reads 'The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem' — that is, King Solomon), merged for the Springfield Republican reviewer with the Stein quotation to characterize the theme of Hemingway's novel: 'In choosing a title from the passage in Ecclesiasticus (sic) beginning 'Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher,' Ernest Hemingway sounds a keynote of disillusionment which echoes throughout the book' (qtd. in Stephens 40). Perhaps knowing that the Biblical 'vanity' has sometimes been translated as 'meaningless' and 'futility' (Bible Hub), the reviewer concludes that in his novel Hemingway 'tries to give an impression of sickening futility' (40).

Such negative readings of his novel probably prompted Hemingway, as Kenneth Lynn (332) and H. R. Stoneback (5) have noted, to delete the opening verse from Ecclesiastes in the third [Svoboda 108], fourth [Letters vol. 3, 159 n. 3], and all subsequent printings of *The Sun Also Rises*. The negativity might have been even more strident had Hemingway not earlier decided to exclude [End Page 81] two especially bleak verses from the first chapter of Ecclesiastes. He apparently never intended to include verse 3, one of the most pessimistic in the entire Bible. Verse 3, situated between 'Vanity of vanities' and 'One generation passeth away,' asks this rhetorical question, 'What profit hath a man of all his labour which he taketh under the sun?' The implied answer, of course, is Nothing. All our work in this world, King Solomon preaches, is nugatory, in vain, profitless, futile. Its inclusion in the second epigraph would not only have darkened the succeeding verses, but also placed the first appearance of the key word sun in a wholly pessimistic context.²

The second especially pessimistic verse that Hemingway rejected, after first considering it as a third epigraph, is verse 18: 'For in much wisdom is much grief; and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow' (qtd. in Svoboda 108). He included that verse in the Sun manuscript he sent to Perkins on 24 April 1926, but even then he was reconsidering it: 'The three quotations in the front I'd like to see set up. May cut out the last one' (Letters vol. 3, 64). Hemingway did in fact 'cut out the last one,' perhaps because the belief that knowledge invites grief flies in the face of Jake Barnes's wisdom in the central Chapter 14 of Sun: 'Perhaps as you went along you did learn something that enables you to 'live in it [the world]'' (119).³

Less than a month after its publication, Hemingway wrote to Perkins with the request 'to lop off the Vanity of vanities' in any further printings and to 'start the quotation with . . . One generation passeth . . . That makes it much clearer' (Letters vol. 3, 158). What this omission means is that Stein's 'You are all a lost generation' is now immediately followed by 'One generation passeth away and another generation cometh.' Now separated by only a single word, the proximity of one generation to another invites readers, as Lynn explains, to better grasp the 'spiritual difference between the two quotations' (332), exactly what Hemingway seems to have intended. In that same letter to Perkins, Hemingway avers that he did not take 'the Gertrude Stein thing very seriously.' Rather, he says, he used the verses from Ecclesiastes 'to play off against that splendid bombast' of the woman he later mocked as 'Le Grand Gertrude Stein' (Letters vol. 2, 412) and against Stein's 'assumption of prophetic roles' (Letters vol. 3, 158). Some thirty years later, in *A Moveable Feast*, Hemingway restated that strategy: 'I tried to balance Miss Stein's quotation from the garage keeper with one from Ecclesiastes' (29-30). Hemingway's concluding, dismissive words on the subject are 'the hell with her [Stein's] lost-generation talk and all the dirty easy labels' (30-31). [End Page 82]

Hemingway's dismissing the lost generation tag after first seeming to promote it — he once considered calling his novel *The Lost Generation* (SAR Facsimile II 626) — mirrors his conflicted feelings toward his novel.⁴ While he was writing the story that began as *Fiesta* (SAR Facsimile 419) but eventually became *The Sun Also Rises*, Hemingway could barely contain his enthusiasm as the words poured out of him almost effortlessly. 'It is so tough and honest and crooked and pleasant and tough, tough hard and beautiful,' he wrote to editor and poet Ernest Walsh the week following the 1925 Pamplona fiesta when he began writing his novel (Letters vol. 2, 362). He told long-time friend Bill Smith that 'it's maybe bludy good' (Letters vol. 2, 365) and later that it 'Ought to be a swell novel. . . . This book is going to crash right through' (Letters vol. 2, 369-70). 'It ought to be damned good,' he wrote to writer Morley Callaghan (Letters vol. 2, 373) and to editor Jane Heap, 'It is a hell of a fine novel. . . . I think it will be a knock out' (Letters vol. 2, 383). After revising the novel, Hemingway continued to think well of

it. 'Reading it over it seems quite exciting,' he told Perkins (Letters vol. 3, 46). 'I feel rather cheerful now about *The Sun*. Hope you feel the same way' (Letters vol. 3, 110).

But once proofs had been sent off to Scribners, Hemingway began to have second thoughts. Perhaps, after all, *Sun* was not quite as good as it seemed while he was writing it. He had spent so much time working and reworking *Sun*, re-writing it three times, that, he told Callaghan, 'I hate it's [sic] guts' (Letters vol. 3, 112). '[I]t's Christ's own distance from the kind of novel I want to write and hope I'll learn to write,' he wrote to Sherwood Anderson six weeks before *Sun* was published (Letters vol. 3, 115). While acknowledging to Scott Fitzgerald that 'in the proof [*The Sun*] read like a good book,' he nevertheless added, 'Christ knows I want to write them a hell of a lot better . . .' (Letters vol. 3, 117). Hemingway's doubts about *Sun* continued after its publication. It 'could have been and should have been a better book,' he told Perkins (Letters vol. 3, 158). 'When I saw a copy of the book and tried to read it,' he wrote editor Isidor Schneider, 'I disliked it intensely' (Letters vol. 3, 190).

Perhaps a series of negative reviews helps explain Hemingway's loss of enthusiasm for *Sun*.⁵ 'Here is a book,' *The Cincinnati Enquirer* wrote, 'which, like its characters, begins nowhere and ends in nothing. . . . *The Sun Also Rises*' is a most unpleasant book' (qtd. in Stephens 31). Aiken, while praising Hemingway's 'brilliant' use of dialogue, nevertheless spoke of 'the unattractiveness, not to say the sordidness, of the scene, and the (on the whole) gracelessness of the people' (qtd. in Stephens 34). The reviewer for *Time* summarized his [End Page 83] response to the novel by citing a remark of Jake's: 'Oh, what the hell!' Hemingway could not have 'chosen a more dreary or aimless setting for a novel,' Cleveland B. Chase wrote in the *Saturday Review of Literature*. His characters, chosen 'apparently at random,' are 'a handful of . . . disillusioned and degenerating expatriates . . . (qtd. in Stephens 42). A lost generation indeed!

But what Hemingway could never accept were the repeated charges that *Sun* was trivial. According to the reviewer for the *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 'the book is concerned with such utter trivialities that your sensitiveness objects violently to it' (qtd. in Stephens 39). For the *Dial* reviewer, the novel assumes 'the rhythm, the monotony, and absence of colour which one associates with a six-day bicycle race' (qtd. in Stephens 35). But *Sun* is not 'a jazz superficial story,' Hemingway protested to Perkins (Letters vol. 3, 148). He became 'disgusted' with Jonathan Cape, his British publisher, when he learned that *Sun* was being marketed 'as an amusing story of the sort of thing young Americans are doing in the Latin quarter today . . . (Letters vol. 3, 251). Nor was the novel 'a hollow or bitter satire but a damn tragedy . . .' (Letters vol. 3, 158). He told Perkins that if *Sun*'s critics 'went any deeper inside they couldn't read it because they would be crying all the time' (Letters vol. 3, 148). What must have especially galled Hemingway was a review written by the novelist and his good friend John Dos Passos. In 'A Lost Generation,' Dos Passos dismissed *Sun* as 'a cock and bull story about a lot of summer tourists getting

drunk and making fools of themselves at a picturesque Iberian folk-festival' (26). According to Dos Passos, Hemingway should have written an epic of a lost generation.

But neither Dos Passos nor the other reviewers seem to have understood that Hemingway never intended to write a lost-generation novel; that's why the central characters of *The Sun Also Rises* are not really lost. They are lost neither physically nor morally. On the most basic geographical level, most of the characters are not wandering around aimlessly; they know exactly where they are going. Jake Barnes, the novel's narrator and protagonist, has a very clear sense of location and geography. In the novel's opening chapter, when his friend Robert Cohn wants to get out of town, Jake first suggests Strasbourg and then Bruges, the Ardennes, or Senlis. When Jake does leave Paris on his three-week summer vacation, his plans have been clearly formed: he and his best friend Bill Gorton will travel by train from Paris to Bayonne in southern France and then travel by bus to Pamplona, Spain. Jake has so carefully planned his trip that he is able to write out 'an itinerary' so that his friends 'could follow us' (69). Even the lesser figures in *Sun* know where they are going: the Dayton [End Page 84] pilgrims are headed to Biarritz and Lourdes (70), and the American family that Jake and Bill befriend will change trains at La Négresse before going on to Biarritz (72). If there is a lost generation of dissipated Americans traipsing about Europe, they seem to have successfully evaded Jake Barnes.

Jake's plans for Pamplona have been made well in advance. He had earlier renewed his bull-fight tickets with an 'old gentleman who subscribes' for him 'every year' (77). Of course, they will again stay for the duration of the fiesta at the Hotel Montoya in rooms that he and hotel owner Juanito Montoya had 'already looked at' (105). When the fiesta ends, there will be no aimless wandering, because everyone has a destination in mind: Bill Gorton and Robert Cohn will head back to Paris; Lady Brett Ashley leaves for Madrid with the bullfighter Pedro Romero; Brett's fiancé Mike Campbell will wait in Saint Jean de Luz for Brett to return to him; and Jake, who has one remaining week of summer vacation, will relax first in Bayonne, France, and then in San Sebastián, Spain, until Brett's call for help that he had 'vaguely . . . expected' (192) arrives. When it does, he will travel directly to Madrid to rescue Brett and then, with her in tow, return to San Sebastián that very night on the 'Sud Express' (196). This is not aimless wandering; this is purposeful and efficient traveling.

Nor are Jake and his surrogates lost in other ways. They are certainly not examples of 'moral bankruptcy' and 'spiritual dissolution.' Mike Campbell and Jake's friend Harvey Stone do indeed lead dissipated lives, but they are the exception, and Jake sees them as men to be pitied⁶ rather than as exemplars to be followed. Harvey Stone's brief drunken appearance in a single chapter of Book I contrasts with the positive characterization of Count Mippipopulous in several chapters. The Count knows exactly who he is and where he's going. Having fought 'in seven wars and four revolutions' (49)

with arrow wounds to prove it, he has gotten ‘to know the values’ (50), to know exactly what he enjoys and what he doesn’t. He likes to watch Brett dancing but not to dance himself. He likes to drink wine but has no desire to write about it. He enjoys cigars that really draw, bouquets of roses, Napoleon brandy, properly chilled champagne, the opportunity to treat others, and the presence of Lady Brett Ashley. He is not in any way lost.

Hemingway was puzzled, he told his editor, that so many reviewers found his characters reprehensible:

The chief criticism seems to be that the people are so unattractive. . . . I wonder where these thoroughly attractive people hang [End Page 85] out and how they behave when they’re drunk and what do they think about nights. Oh hell. There’s at least one highly moral hotel keeper in the book. That’s my contention and I’ll stick to it. And an exemplary Englishman named Harris.

(Letters vol. 3, 183-84)

Like Count Mippipopulous, both Montoya, the ‘highly moral hotel keeper,’ and the Englishman Harris know who they are and where they are going. Montoya is guided by enduring values of friendship, loyalty, and *afición*. Harris, like the Count, enjoys treating others: he pays for several rounds of drinks at a Spanish pub and tries to pay for more (103). Although invited to Pamplona by Jake, Harris chooses to stay longer in rural Burguete because there’s ‘not much more time to fish’ (102). But as Jake and Bill board their bus to Pamplona, Harris gives each of them an envelope with a dozen fishing flies he had tied himself, emblematic of his competence, professionalism, gratitude, and generosity.

But neither Harris, Montoya, nor the Count is American, and for that reason perhaps not part of the so-called Lost Generation. But Jake Barnes is thoroughly American — he hails from the American heartland of Kansas City — and he is not at all lost. As we’ve seen, Jake’s literal travels are direct routes to his destinations without deviation.⁷ His emotional travels are more complex and perhaps more circuitous but always purposeful, never aimless. Like the Count, Jake too has gotten ‘to know the values,’ and from them he has developed a moral code that is easy to miss because Jake practices his code without broadcasting it. Indeed, he discloses it directly only at night and then only rarely, when he has difficulty sleeping and cannot stop his head from working. Hemingway told Perkins that he had ‘discovered that most people don’t think in words — as they do in everybody’s writing now — and so in Sun A.R. critics miss their interior monologues and aren’t happy — or disappointed’ (Letters vol. 3, 158). Two major interior monologues in *The Sun Also Rises* promulgate Jake’s moral code.

The first monologue occurs when Jake returns to his Paris apartment after he and Brett, following a long separation, suddenly find themselves together again at a dancing-club. Once alone in a taxi, they confess their abiding love for each other while acknowledging that the wound Jake suffered in World War I — apparently he has had his penis shot off⁸ — makes their continuing relationship impossible for Brett. ‘It isn’t all that you know,’ Brett tells Jake. ‘No, but it always gets to be,’ Jake responds (22). Back in his apartment, Jake tries to banish [End Page 86] Brett from his thoughts by checking his mail and reading bull-fight papers. But soon enough his ‘head started to work,’ and he relives the moment when an Italian liaison colonel confirmed the extent of Jake’s war wound: ‘You . . . have given more than your life’ (25). Jake’s response — ‘I try and play it along and just not make trouble for people’ (26) — makes clear a cornerstone of his moral code: he will not allow his problems to disrupt the lives of others. Jake understands that the Italian colonel ‘was putting himself in my place,’ and he will try to empathize with others as well. Jake is so intent upon not allowing his injury to make trouble for others that, except for Brett, his Paris friends appear to know nothing about it. His closest friend, Robert Cohn, never knows and never suspects — either that Jake has been wounded in the war or that he and Brett have long been in love. The perceptive Count, seeing that Jake and Brett get along so well together but knowing nothing about Jake’s injury, asks, ‘Why don’t you get married, you two?’ (50).

But Jake’s injury does make trouble for people in Pamplona when Brett coerces him into bringing Romero and her together. Although Jake six times refuses Brett’s request, he finally succumbs when she twice calls him ‘darling’ and then pleads, ‘Please stay by me and see me through this’ (147). Jake’s acquiescence leads to Cohn’s calling him a ‘pimp’ (152) before knocking him unconscious, then knocking Mike down, and then finding Romero and beating him badly. When Jake returns to the café where Brett and Romero had connected, he pointedly notices, ‘The coffee-glasses and our three empty cognac glasses were on the table. A waiter came with a cloth and picked up the glasses and mopped off the table’ (149). Jake intuitively knows that he has created a mess — his is one of the three empty cognac glasses — that must be cleaned up. The waiter cleans up things on a literal level, but the emotional mess will require more than picking up glasses and mopping off a table. One reason that on the last night of the fiesta Jake feels ‘[l]ow as hell’ and ‘gets drunker than [he] ever remembered having been’ (178) is that he has made trouble for many people — Cohn, Mike, Brett, Romero, and of course himself. At this point Jake may seem lost.

Earlier in his second, longer, and more substantial internal monologue, Jake had continued to define and expand his moral code. The monologue occurs during his first night back in Pamplona following a quiet weeklong interlude with Bill in the sleepy Spanish village of Burguete. Jake and Bill had reunited with Brett, Mike, and Cohn for

an evening meal with ‘much wine’ [End Page 87] (117) that left Jake ‘very drunk’ — but not drunk enough to prevent him from disclosing his definition of morality:

I wished Mike would not behave so terribly to Cohn, though. Mike was a bad drunk. Brett was a good drunk. Bill was a good drunk. Cohn was never drunk. Mike was unpleasant after he passed a certain point. I liked to see him hurt Cohn. I wished he would not do it, though, because afterward it made me disgusted at myself. That was morality; things that made you disgusted afterward. No, that must be immorality. That was a large statement. What a lot of bilge I could think up at night. What rot, I could hear Brett say it. What rot!

But what Brett might judge to be ‘rot’ and others to be ‘bilge,’ Jake — like Hemingway — offers as a clear, concise statement of his moral position. We know that Hemingway embraces Jake’s definition of morality because, six years later in *Death in the Afternoon*, Hemingway writes, ‘So far, about morals, I know only that what is moral is what you feel good after and what is immoral is what you feel bad after . . .’ (4). This is the standard — how you feel afterward — that Jake uses to measure the morality of his actions. That Jake feels depressed after his pimping has led to Brett’s going off with Romero is a clear sign of its immorality. That Jake feels ‘fine’ after traveling to Madrid to comfort Brett following Romero’s departure is an equally clear indication that he has acted morally in his decision to rescue her. There is nothing morally bankrupt, spiritually dissolute, or lost in Jake’s beliefs or actions.

Part of Jake’s moral code involves the idea of compensation or reciprocity — the notion that our actions have consequences for ourselves as well as for others. Jake’s world is one where nothing is totally free:

I had been having Brett for a friend. I had not been thinking of her side of it. I had been getting something for nothing. That only delayed the presentation of the bill. The bill always came.

For Jake, the bill eventually arrives in the form of two telegrams from Brett: ‘COULD YOU COME HOTEL MONTANA MADRID AM RATHER IN TROUBLE BRETT’ (192). Jake’s telegram in response — ‘ARRIVING SUD EXPRESS TOMORROW’ (192) — is acknowledgment that rescuing Brett in Madrid repays her for their sexless friendship.⁹ By the end of the novel, when Brett is penniless (‘I didn’t have a sou’ [195]), Jake’s paying for their drinks at [End Page 88] the Palace Hotel, their meal at Botín’s restaurant, their taxi ride, and their train tickets back to San Sebastián — along with his having patiently listened to her go on and on about Romero — is clear evidence that he has thought about ‘her side of it.’

But Jake's second interior monologue goes beyond a working definition of morality to announce a central tenet of his 'philosophy.' Jake believes that anything in life that is any 'good' has to be paid for in one of four ways: 'Either you paid by learning about them, or by experience, or by taking chances, or by money' (119). Jake has paid for 'bullfighting,' one of the good things in his life, in at least three of the four ways. He learns about bullfighting by reading bull-fight newspapers like *Le Toril* (25) and by speaking with aficionados like Montoya. He experiences bullfighting by traveling to Spain each summer to watch, first, the running of the bulls and then the bull fights themselves, sometimes sitting ringside in barrera seats, sometimes viewing from half-way up the amphi-theater (129). Bullfighting for Jake may not involve deadly risks, but for others it does: during the running of the bulls one man is caught by a bull, gored, and killed. But Jake does pay for bullfighting with money: tickets for the bullfights along with travel expenses, hotel accommodations, and prices for food and wine doubled during the fiesta.

Here is the essence of Jake's philosophy:

Enjoying living was learning to get your money's worth and knowing when you had it. You could get your money's worth. The world was a good place to buy in.

This is not a philosophy of futility, meaninglessness, or spiritual dissolution; it is an optimistic, even buoyant view of life that places responsibility for happiness squarely in human hands. Unlike the verse from Ecclesiastes that Hemingway proposed before rejecting it — 'For in much wisdom is much grief and he that increaseth knowledge increases sorrow' — Jake believes that an increase in knowledge — learning — is more likely to produce enjoyment than sorrow. Significantly, Jake does learn during the course of his narrative, first from Count Mippipopolous but most importantly from Pedro Romero. Romero teaches Jake that it is possible to control the forces that threaten to destroy you and that it is equally possible to recover from defeats and misdeeds.

On the final day of the fiesta, Jake pays special attention to the bullfighting of Pedro Romero: [End Page 89]

The fight with Cohn had not touched his spirit but his face had been smashed and his body hurt. He was wiping all that out now. Each thing that he did with this bull wiped that out a little cleaner.

Romero's bullfighting demonstrates for Jake that it is in one's power to erase — to wipe out — beatings and mistakes. Like Romero, Jake had been beaten by Cohn — punched three times until knocked unconscious (152) — but unlike Romero, he has made mistakes as well; he has acted immorally, as he well knows, in bringing Brett and Romero together. Jake is unable to wipe out his moral lapse or cleanse himself in

Pamplona — when he turns on the taps in the bathroom ‘the water would not run’ (155) — which is one reason why, the day after the fiesta ends, he decides to leave the safe, comfortable French town of Bayonne for the seaside Spanish resort of San Sebastián. He knows exactly how to get there, too — changing trains at Irun and then, ‘forty minutes and eight tunnels’ (188) later, arriving in San Sebastián. There, where the ‘smooth and firm’ and ‘yellow’ sand (189) of the beach recalls for Jake the ‘firm and smooth’ and ‘yellow’ sand (169) of Romero’s bull ring and its lessons in self-renewal, Jake cleanses himself by swimming and diving in the waters of San Sebastián bay: ‘It felt as though you could never sink’ (191). Jake knows exactly where he is and precisely what he is doing. He is in no sense lost here, nor later when he takes the Sud Express to Madrid’s Norte Station, taxis first to Brett’s Hotel Montana and then escorts her to the bar at the Palace Hotel before selecting Botín’s restaurant for lunch and then, in the novel’s final scene, telling the taxi driver exactly ‘where to drive’ (198).

So Gertrude Stein’s ‘lost generation’ assertion in no way accurately describes Jake’s behavior in Madrid — or earlier in Paris or Pamplona. But for any reader inclined to accept Stein’s generalization as applicable to *The Sun Also Rises*, the second epigraph from Ecclesiastes provides a helpful and needed corrective. Whereas Stein’s categorical ‘You are all a lost generation’ posits stasis, Solomon’s words describe motion, process, and pattern: sun, wind, rivers, and generations coming and going but all returning again to the place of their origin. Within the flux of experience, the motion and the change, there is an order that can be comprehended and perhaps serve as a guide for human behavior. That is, there are intelligible patterns within the natural and human spheres that, if perceived, offer some help to members of Jake’s — and all — generations. Jake had earlier sensed frustrating patterns in his long relationship with Brett — ‘I had the feeling as in a nightmare of it all being something [End Page 90] repeated, something I had been through’ — but he had felt powerless to do anything about them: they were something ‘that now I must go through again’ (52). But after carefully observing and learning from Romero’s bull-fighting and then receiving two identically worded telegrams from Brett, Jake seems to realize that the recurring patterns of his relationship with Brett must be broken. That realization comes as Jake wires Brett that he will travel to Madrid, where Brett is ‘rather in trouble’:

That seemed to handle it. That was it. Send a girl off with one man. Introduce her to another to go off with him. Now go and bring her back. And sign the wire with love. That was it all right. I went into lunch.

Jake acknowledges, for the first time, the harmful pattern of his behavior toward Brett: he admits responsibility for driving Brett into Cohn’s arms¹¹ and then for arranging her tryst with Romero. But the harshly ironic, self-indicting tone of this

passage, created by the series of short, simple sentences with imperatives ('Send,' 'Introduce,' 'go,' 'bring,' and 'sign'), signals Jake's resolve to break the destructive pattern. That resolution is strengthened when Jake finds Brett's Madrid hotel room 'in that disorder produced only by those who have always had servants' (194). Jake recognizes the pattern: Brett creates messes for others to clean up. Brett flicks cigarette ashes on Jake's apartment rug (47), and she leaves behind brandy-glasses (28) and cognac-glasses (149) for Jake or others to clean up: 'A waiter came with a cloth and picked up the glasses and mopped off the table' (149). When Brett's affair with Romero leads her fiancée Mike Campbell to angrily tip over a café table so that 'all the beers and the dish of shrimps went over in a crash,' Brett responds, characteristically, with 'Let's get out of this' (165). When Brett departs Pamplona, there is a bull's ear, Jake's handkerchief, and 'a number of Muratti cigarette-stubs, shoved far back in the drawer of the bed-table that stood beside her bed in the Hotel Montoya . . .' (158). Others must deal with the messes that Brett leaves behind.

Brett's penchant for creating disorder is not the only pattern that Jake discerns when the two come together in the novel's final chapter. Jake also recognizes Brett's helplessness and lack of self-discipline. 'I have to see you' (22), Brett had told Jake in Paris after Jake suggested they keep away from each other. 'I can't help it' (146), Brett had four times told Jake in Pamplona to persuade him to bring her to Romero. 'How can I help it?' (197), Brett asks Jake in Madrid when she cannot stop talking about Romero even though she had [End Page 91] several times pleaded, '[L]et's not talk about it. Let's never talk about it' (194). Only when Jake cautions, 'You'll lose it if you talk about it' (197), does Brett finally finish talking about Romero. Just as Brett cannot clean up her messes, she lacks the discipline to finish things on her own. When Count Mippipopulous tells Brett, '[Y]ou never finish your sentences at all,' she responds, 'Leave 'em for you to finish. Let any one finish them as they like' (48). In Madrid, the 'any one' who finishes things 'as they like' is Jake. Indeed, the novel's final chapter focuses on various sorts of endings. The second sentence announces, 'The fiesta was finished' (183), and the last sentence of the second paragraph drives home that fact: 'The fiesta was over' (183). The end of the fiesta marks the temporary close of the warm friendship — 'So long, fella' and 'So long, old kid!' (186) — between Jake and Bill. One day later, Jake receives the telegrams from Brett that mean his respite in San Sebastián is finished — 'all shot to hell' (192). The emphasis on endings continues when Jake arrives in Madrid: 'The Norte station in Madrid is the end of the line. All trains finish there. They don't go on anywhere' (193). Here Hemingway uses the trio — one of his most important rhetorical strategies: three short, simple, repeating declarative sentences — to emphasize the importance of endings, specifically to foreshadow the novel's conclusion.

The pattern of Jake's ending things that Brett cannot culminate as the two leave Botín's restaurant with Jake saying, 'I'll finish this' (198). On its simplest level, Jake's

statement simply means that he will finish drinking the wine in his glass. But its implications go much further. First, Jake is getting his money's worth of the rioja alta wine he's paid for by drinking all of it. Second, he will not leave a mess behind for others to clean up; unlike the earlier scene in his Paris apartment, there will be no need for anyone to pour an undrunk 'half-full glass down the sink' (28). Finally, 'I'll finish this' picks up the earlier 'The fiesta was finished' (183) and 'All trains finish there' (193) to suggest that Jake will soon finish things with Brett. As we've seen, Brett had earlier told the Count and Jake that she willingly lets others — indeed 'any one' — 'finish them [her sentences] as they like.' And it is the word 'like,' always in reference to Jake and never to Brett, that is repeated in the penultimate scene of the novel:

'You like to eat, don't you?' she said.

'Yes,' I said. 'I like to do a lot of things.'

'What do you like to do?'

'Oh,' I said. 'I like to do a lot of things.'

The novel concludes with Jake doing many of the things he likes: dining on 'roast young suckling pig' (197), drinking several bottles of rioja alta, and — 'settled back' in a taxi with Brett resting 'comfortably' (198) against him — driving along Madrid's 'Gran Via' (198).

When Jake sees 'a mounted policeman in khaki directing traffic,' Hemingway suggests another thematic pattern that relates to Jake and Brett: war and the military. That pattern begins in Paris with Jake telling the prostitute Georgette, 'I got hurt in the war' (14) and continues in Pamplona with Jake's likening a dinner there to 'certain dinners [he] remember[s] from the war. There was much wine, an ignored tension, and a feeling of things coming that you could not prevent happening' (117). War imagery reaches its apex as the fiesta 'exploded' and the café, now equipped with 'cast-iron tables and severe folding chairs,' becomes 'like a battleship stripped for action' (122) as 'the rocket that announced the fiesta' is accompanied by 'a gray ball of smoke' and 'a shrapnel burst' (123). The military theme culminates with Jake's recognition of the policeman in 'khaki,' the traditional military color. But there is no indication that Brett sees the policeman, because she has apparently turned to Jake to say, with a touch of self-pity, 'Oh, Jake, . . . we could have had such a damned good time together' (198). But unlike the earlier taxi scene in Paris where he is staring at Brett (21), Jake is looking not at Brett but straight ahead at the khaki-clad policeman, suggesting his recognition, as their taxi slows, 'suddenly pressing Brett against me' (198), that it was the war that brought Brett and him together. On a deeper level, Jake resists blaming the war and the sexual injury he sustained in it for the failure of their relationship. His skepticism — 'Isn't it pretty to think so?' — that he and Brett ever 'could have had such a damned good

time together' constitutes his refusal to believe that, under any conditions and circumstances, their relationship would have worked. Perhaps the 'raised . . . baton' (198) of the mounted policeman recalls for Jake the 'fixed batons' (169) of bull-fighting, reminding him that the relationship between Brett and Romero failed because the bull-fighter grew 'ashamed' (194) of Brett's short hair and her unwillingness to grow it out and because he feared she would 'go away from him' (195). Here is yet another pattern driven home to Jake: Brett's inconstancy. In Paris she had left Jake to go off with Robert Cohn, claiming that it was 'Better for you. Better for me' (46). In Pamplona, she had left her fiancé Mike to go off with Pedro Romero, claiming 'I've got to do something I really want to do' (147). Mike is not surprised because going off with other men is what Brett does. He had earlier acknowledged [End Page 93] that 'Brett's had affairs with men before,' that she's even 'gone off with men' (114). In fact, Mike knows the pattern well: he will wait for Brett 'at this pub in Saint Jean' de Luz (185), knowing that, as she later tells Jake, 'I'm going back to Mike. . . . He's my sort of thing' (195).

So the second epigraph — King Solomon's verses — with their recognition of patterns and of cyclical renewal proves more powerful and more descriptive of the characters and events of *The Sun Also Rises* than Stein's bald assertion. Significantly, Hemingway acknowledges that he first heard of Stein's words, which she had overheard from a garage patron, only after he had written his novel (SAR Facsimile II 627) and after he had chosen the verses from Ecclesiastes: in the manuscript he sent to Perkins, Stein's words are written in ink above the typed Biblical verses.¹² It seems that Hemingway wanted Ecclesiastes to have the last word, counting as well on the contrast between its status as eternal scripture versus fleeting conversation to make clear that Solomon, rather than Stein, should provide the guiding principle for interpreting his novel. Six years after the publication of *Sun*, Hemingway told used-book dealer Paul Romaine that in order 'to show the superiority of the earlier Hebrew writers over the later [I] quoted Ecclesiastes verses G. Stein.' The verses suggest that the two epigraphs are not meant to be complementary but oppositional; Allen Josephs is right in labeling them 'opposing epigraphs' (231) and Matthew Bruccoli equally correct in asserting that the two epigraphs 'were intended to clash, and the reader was expected to regard Ecclesiastes as a correction to Stein' (SAR Facsimile I xiii). In that same letter to Romaine, Hemingway writes that since *Sun* he has 'not been occupied with this so-called (but not by me) lost generation' (SL 365-66).

It's time, then, that we accept Hemingway's word that *The Sun Also Rises* does not portray members of a lost generation wandering aimlessly across France and Spain. The marketing folks at Scribner and at Houghton Mifflin Harcourt may have persuaded themselves that Stein's lost generation tag helps sell their books, but careful Hemingway readers like H. R. Stoneback (5 and passim) and Matthew Nickel (62) understand that Jake Barnes — representative of the generation of Americans who came of age during

World War I — has over the postwar years recognized, like Solomon, recurring patterns that have enabled him to develop a practical definition of morality and a working philosophy of life. As the novel concludes, Jake is in no sense lost: in the same way that he leads Brett from the Montana Hotel to the Palace Bar to Botín's [End Page 94] restaurant to Madrid's Gran Via and, that night, back to San Sebastián on the Sud Express, so he is now directing his life with a clear-eyed plan and purpose. Having gotten to 'know the values' and having learned from Pedro Romero both how to confront the forces that threaten him and how to wipe out past defeats,¹³ Jake now experiences the world as the 'good place to buy in' (119) he had earlier posited. As for the 'so-called (but not by me) lost generation,' that's just one of the 'dirty easy labels' that have but limited relevance to Jake Barnes and *The Sun Also Rises*.

NOTES

1. All Biblical quotations are from the King James version, which Hemingway himself used, as he tells Perkins (*Letters* vol. 3 72).
2. Hemingway evidently thought, mistakenly, that verse 3 ('What profit . . .') had been included in the early printings because his 19 November 1926 letter to Perkins (*Letters* vol. 3, 158) asks specifically that that verse be deleted along with the vanities.
3. All quotations from *The Sun Also Rises* are to the Hemingway Library Edition. Scribner, 2014.
4. It was not unusual for Hemingway to change his mind about the quality of his stories. He told Ernest Walsh that he disliked 'The Undeclared' when he read it in proof but 'thought it was a great story when I wrote it' (*Letters* vol. 3, 11). He reversed himself again less than a month later, writing to Walsh, 'I have re-discovered that *The Undeclared* is a grand story and I'm very proud I wrote it' (*Letters* vol. 3, 26).]
5. Hemingway carefully read reviews of *Sun*, which Perkins periodically sent him. *Letters* vol. 3. 145; 158; 177n.1.
6. Of Harold Stearns, the model for Harvey Stone, Hemingway wrote to Scott Fitzgerald, 'I'm sorry as hell for H.S. but there's nothing anybody can do for him except give him money and be nice to him' (*Letters* vol. 2, 455) — exactly how Jake treats Harvey Stone.
7. See Daiker, "I Hated to Leave France."
8. In 1951, Hemingway wrote Thomas Bledsoe, an editor at Rinehart, about 'the whole genesis of *The Sun Also Rises*,' explaining that he had known soldiers with 'genito urinary wounds' and 'wondered what a man's life would have been like after that if his penis had been lost and his testicles and spermatocord remained intact' (*Selected Letters* 745). Hemingway told writer George Plimpton that Jake's testicles were intact so that he was capable of feeling sexual desire but not satisfying it.
9. The relationship between Jake and Brett may not be totally sexless. In addition to heavy kissing, it seems that the two may have tried to accommodate each other physically in an important scene in Jake's Paris apartment in Chapter 7. First while the Count is in Jake's living room and then after Brett sends him 'to the other side of town' to buy champagne, Jake and Brett apparently try several sexual positions, each attempt signalled by Hemingway's rare use of the colon. Afterwards, Brett asks, 'Do you feel better, darling?' Even though Jake says, 'It's better,' Brett's telling him that she'll be leaving town 'tomorrow' shows that their attempts have been unsatisfying (45-46). [End Page 95]
10. Although Jake qualifies his assertion with '[i]t seemed like a fine philosophy. In five years, I thought, it will seem just as silly as all the other fine philosophies I've had,' he then qualifies his qualification: 'Perhaps that wasn't true, though. Perhaps as you went along you did learn something' (119). In Hemingway's fiction, the characters most certain that they possess the truth, who utter broad generalities, like Mrs. Adams in 'The Doctor and the Doctor's Wife,' Bill in 'The Three Day Blow,' or the bicycle team manager in *The Sun Also Rises* (or

Gertrude Stein in the novel's epigraph), are not to be taken seriously. Those like Jake, Nick Adams, and Doctor Adams, whose statements are prefaced by terms like 'perhaps,' 'I don't know,' and 'it all depends,' are more credible.

11. Jake acknowledges partial responsibility for Brett's leaving Paris with Cohn because, as he tells Bill Gorton, 'She wanted to get out of town and she can't go anywhere alone' (82). The reason Brett wants to leave Paris until her fiancé Mike Campbell arrives from Scotland is her painful, frustrating, mutually unfulfilling encounters with Jake. 'I can't stand it,' Brett tells Jake at one point (21). She later explains that getting away from Jake is 'Better for you. Better for me' (46). Her final words to Jake before leaving Paris with Cohn are 'Oh, don't!' (53).

12. Kennedy Library Ms of SAR.

13. See Daiker, 'Jake Barnes as Teacher and Learner.'