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THE AFTERMATH OF WAR: TRAUMA, DISILLUSIONMENT, AND ESCAPISM IN ERNEST (MILLER) HEMINGWAY'S *THE SUN ALSO RISES* (1926)

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ABSTRACT

La Grande Guerre (1914-1918) a eu des répercussions désastreuses sur l'humanité entière, notamment sur toutes les personnes qui y ont participé de manière concrète ou symbolique. Hemingway, pour sa part, ne s'attarde pas sur les lourdes pertes en hommes et en matériel engendrées par ce cataclysme. Son originalité consiste, en revanche, à s'appuyer sur son expérience personnelle de la guerre, pour analyser ses effets insidieux, en particulier les blessures physiques, mais surtout psychiques, morales, émotionnelles, etc. En bon psychologue, son souci est de montrer à quel point il est difficile, voire impossible pour ceux qui en ont subi les conséquences de panser leurs plaies et de se reconstruire, surtout après qu'ils ont perdu espoir en eux-mêmes et en l'avenir, estiment que la vie est dénuée de sens, et choisissent de trouver une consolation dans des futilités, qui, en réalité, ne font que renforcer leur égarement, leur errance, et leur déchéance.

Mots-clés : guerre, blessures, aliénation, désillusion, scepticisme, égarement, errance, vie dénuée de sens, banalités, échec.

As a war veteran, Hemingway abundantly draws from his own experience to vividly picture characters whose lives have been shattered by the Great War, laying emphasis on how it is difficult, even impossible for them to reconstruct themselves because not only have they lost faith in themselves and in the future but they also believe that life is senseless. Their hopelessness and aimlessness are all the more acute since to give a meaning to their existence, they indulge in escapist activities which accentuate their mental aberration, wandering, and downfall.

Introduction

Judged to be the most cataclysmic period in human history, the twentieth century was marked by two world wars which erupted out of national hatreds, political rivalries and antagonisms, imperialism as well as military alliances, secret treaties, and economic struggles for power and domination. As the first large-scale modern war, World War I (1914-1918), in particular, was extremely apocalyptic since it coincided with an era of great achievements in science and technology, hence the uncontrolled utilization of an arsenal of sophisticated destructive weapons that engendered considerable losses in every field. Though the heavy material and human casualties represented the most perceptible consequences of the four-year conflict, one cannot afford to overlook its other insidious social, emotional, intellectual, mental, moral, and psychological

aftereffects, including alienation, trauma, hopelessness, disenchantment, lostness, moral degradation, and resignation. Add to these sly repercussions, the ever-presence of violence, the imminence of death as well as the instability, uncertainty, insecurity, and meaninglessness of life.

Just as the atrocities of the American Civil-War (1861-1865) prompted American writers to move away from the idealism of romanticism to a more realistic portrayal of life, the cruelties of the Great War, along with the materialism, corruption, and social transformations that made the age darker, urged a group of disillusioned artists to rebel, not through social and political upheavals, but through a new way of life reflected in an innovative literary movement known as modernism. For instance, in reaction to their changing world, Gertrude Stein (1874-1946), an American modernist writer, who lived in Paris, and who was the confidante of many expatriate artists whom she metaphorically and ironically labeled as a "lost generation", like Sherwood Anderson, Ernest Hemingway, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Sinclair Lewis, William Faulkner, Ezra Pound, and T. S. Eliot experimented with a provocative writing style by departing from traditional literary conventions (McMichael *et al*, 2004: 1321).

"Lost generation" artists used art, not only as a means of resistance and resilience, but also as a tool in their hands to voice their modern consciousness and capture the chaotic nature of the modern world, as can be noticed in *The Sun Also Rises* (1926), where Hemingway's characters' wild behaviour and idle talk reflect their disenchantment, fickle emotions, thoughtlessness, and aimlessness of life. In his introduction to John Dos Passos's *The 42nd Parallel*, Alfred Kazin puts it so well in the following terms:

> For the writers of the "lost generation", "art" was the highest possible resistance to the "swindle" of the social and the ultimate proof of one's aristocratic individualism in the modern world. Art was the *nuova scienza*, the true science of the new world, the only possible language – it would capture the discontinuities of the modern world and use for itself the violent motions and radical new energies of the post-war period (Kazin, 1969: ix).

As a prototype war novel, *The Sun Also Rises* is set against the backdrop of the Great War, the dramatic conflict which, next to the Greco-Turkish (1919-1922) war and the Spanish Civil-War (1936-1939), largely contributed to shaping Hemingway's mind, personality, and experience. No or little wonder then that parallels can be drawn between his life and the lives of his fictitious characters, most of whom are war veterans. Among other similarities, one can mention physical injuries and alienation, the latter concept understood first as the deep negative changes which they have gone through on different planes. Secondly, alienation suggests that the generations that came to maturity in Europe and America around World War I and World War II became awfully scared of real life, lonely, unfriendly, loveless, doubtful, indifferent, sorrowful, and intolerant. Much to their surprise, they realized that their in-bred idealism, refined civilization, dreams, hopes, beliefs, and traditional values were vanishing.

This article closely examines through an eclectic approach how Hemingway's *dramatis personae*, who have suffered from the first world war one way or another, and who find refuge in Paris and Spain to forge a new destiny, are on the road to ruin, for the simple reason that their futile life, which is based on endless and random wandering, homelessness, idleness, aimlessness, fake camaraderie and love, alcoholism, games as well as messy and destructive sexuality, is synonymous with escapism, not with escape, i.e. , migration, quest, or home-founding. Clearly, what is at work in their lifestyle is the dynamics of post-war trauma, disenchantment, and lostness.

I. WORLD WAR I: A SCOURGE FOR MAN AND CIVILIZATION

In his historical or event-inspired novel, *The Sun Also Rises*, Hemingway, a European war correspondent, whose early adulthood was shattered by World War I, like Gertrude Stein, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and John Dos Passos, explores the evils in the modern man-made world. Ranking among the mature fiction writers, who know how to tell a story, and who have a thorough knowledge of human characteristics, his originality lies in the fact that rather than describe the war itself, he deems it more instructive to scrutinize its unseen social, physical, mental, emotional, psychological, religious, and philosophical effects on those who have taken part in it or witnessed it. Of paramount importance, Hemingway shows how difficult, even impossible it is for the wounded to recover their full moral and spiritual health.

The author's genius also resides in his ability, as a war veteran, a psychologist, a psychoanalyst, and a psychiatrist, to listen to and hear the voices and speeches of his war-torn characters, read, and interpret their faces, minds, and manners, while stressing the moral and emotional impacts of the war on them so as to make readers better understand the complexities of their strange and destructive make-believe world. As can be seen, the novelist's preoccupation with the far-reaching and indirect effects of traumatizing events on individuals appeared earlier in his story "Indian Camp", from *In Our Time* (1925), where a boy named Nick Adams witnesses his father, a doctor, deliver an Indian woman of a baby by Caesarean operation, not only with a jack-knife, but, more atrocious, without general anesthesia. The cruelty of the surgery and the unbearable pain suffered by the woman left indelible psychic marks on the child. Also, the horror of the act and the two-day screaming of the woman were a profoundly moving experience which caused the husband to weep, and even to cut his throat with a razor as if he were sympathizing with her wife (Young, 1968: 147).

Putting his disillusioned characters in a hermetic world of their own, the all-knowing, or omniscient novelist, reveals them more from the inside or "screen of consciousness" (Macauley, 1987: 88) than from the outside. Instead of drawing introductory capsule portraits to fix them in readers' minds as early as the opening pages, he sculptures them in such a way that the complex and understated reasons behind their unusual demeanour can be deciphered by perspicacious readers, who simultaneously participate in the narrative. Equally noticeable, the novelist's strong power of suggestiveness helps him reconstitute, as the story unfolds, his characters' ungraceful consciousness and frustrations.

Like Nick Adams, in "The Battler", from *In Our Time*, or Frederick Henry, in *A Farewell to Arms* (1929), Jake Barnes, Hemingway's narrator-agent and voice in *The Sun Also Rises*, is a World War I American veteran. Severely hurt in the spine by a piece of shrapnel, like Hemingway himself when he was on the Italian front, Jake narrowly escaped death, but lost his virility. Being "biologically and emotionally impotent out of this misfortune" (Spilka, 1962: 18), his life has irreversibly gone to ruin. The point is that not only is he morally and psychologically weakened by the war, but he is equally deprived of his sexual vigour, which condemns him to satisfy himself with Platonic love. Truly, Jake is to be pitied since he is unable to have sexual intercourses with the women who desire him and whom he desires, especially Georgette, a prostitute, or Brett Ashley. This means that his sex does not help him tighten the intimacy between him and women.

Jake's sex impediment is all the more impoverishing since he knows that he will no longer enjoy the pleasure of sexuality and the joys of fatherhood, and neither will he be seen as a man in the gendered sense of the term. No less belittling, Jake cannot take part in sexual activity, that is, "what has always been the favorite sport of the human race" (Woodring, 1970: 40). Therefore, it is not surprising that he should feel anxious, embarrassed, mortified, disgusted, defeated, demeaned, and worthless when it comes to sexual intercourse, as Georgette condescendingly points it out: "It's a shame you're sick" (*SAR*, 24). Similarly, Brett is awfully sorry and uneasy about the fact that Jake is wholly lacking in sexual power.

What is really pathetic about Jake's curse is that his attempt to resign to his emasculation and to sublimate his sex drives as well as his disappointment towards futile activities is vain, for he internally suffers a lot, spending sleepless nights recalling the irreparable damage of the war and pondering over the meaninglessness of life in general, and of his in particular. Beyond doubt, his invalidating injury has turned him into a dead loss, an irredeemable casualty, physically alive, but sexually, socially, emotionally, morally, intellectually, psychologically, and spiritually crippled. Comparing Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises* to T. S. Eliot's *Waste Land* (1922), and Jake to Fisher King, Philip Young aptly comments:

> Here is the protagonist gone impotent, and his land gone sterile. Eliot's London is Hemingway's Paris, where spiritual life in general, and Jake's sexual life in particular, are alike impoverished. Prayer breaks down and fails, a knowledge of traditional distinctions between good and evil is largely lost, copulation is morally neutral and, cut off from the past chiefly by the spiritual disaster of the war, life has become mostly meaningless" (Young, 1962: 9).

One plausible reason for Brett's emotional crisis, unselfconsciousness, and skepticism is that, as a nurse on the Italian front, like Catherine Barkley, in Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms*, she, too, has been staggered by the war. Her soul has received a wounding shock, in part because her first sweetheart died in the war from dysentery, and in part because, as misfortune never comes singly, she is about to separate from her second

lover, Mike, who has also been consumed by the war, exactly like Catherine Barkley's fiancé. Brett feels all the more despondent as she cannot rely on Jake, who is sexually petrified, like Clifford Chatterley, D. H. Lawrence's World War I veteran in *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1928), whose wife, Constance, is frustrated because he is both paraplegic and impotent. All these people, as can be seen, are illustrative of the irremediable ruins of the war.

The devastating impacts of World War I on both Jake's and Brett's "Phallic Consciousness" (Spilka, 1962: 18) as well as their dead-end and arid relationship account, consequently, for their post-traumatic stress, moral vacuum, deception, resignation, hopelessness, purposelessness, and worries about the arbitrariness and absurdity of existence. The same dissatisfaction with short-lived or sterile love equally justifies Brett's pessimism, self-centeredness, carelessness, and religious skepticism. In connection with that, a comparison can be made between Brett's abortive love affairs and Hemingway's. The latter, it is true, does not believe in marriage as a sacred union, requiring reciprocal love, mutual respect and support, dedication, and sacrifices, as shown through his romantic relationships, after his recovery, and especially through his divorce after divorce. In his *A Farewell to Arms*, he unambiguously rejects friendship and the romantic ideal of love, asserting straight out that all relationships must end in destruction and death.

Arguably, Brett has become outrageous, airy, uppish, subversive, and even nihilistic because all her love experiences have come to nothing, and so have all her hopes and expectations. Being completely "desexed by the war" (Spilka, 1962: 18) like Jake, she arrogantly defies long-established conventions, and reinvents an unreal world of her own by adopting new norms, codes, and values at the risk of being ostracized. While Georgette, the whore, reduces love to money, Brett, as for her, reduces it to nothing but promiscuous sexuality. In so doing, she devalues, depreciates love and sexuality, and promotes perversion. Yet, examined from a psychological angle, her sexual dissoluteness and purposelessness may well be read as an unconscious and fruitless attempt to compensate for the loss of her first fiancé. However that may be, Brett, Jake, and their relationship with no future prospects are symptomatic of the damage of the "dirty war" (*SAR*, 24), but also of the Twenties, a turbulent period characterized by moral bankruptcy, spiritual dissolution, unrealized love, disenchantment, and, above all, lack of ambition, contrarily to the spirit of the Founding Fathers and American tycoons, who were all born dreamers. As Bill Gorton makes Jake bear in mind: "All our biggest businessmen have been dreamers. Look at Ford. Look at President Coolidge. Look at Rockefeller. Look at Jo. Davidson" (*SAR*, 129).

While Jake cannot marry Brett because of his sexual disability, Robert Cohn, an American writer, but not a war veteran, is also disqualified right away as a result of his Jewish extraction. Though he is rich, Brett, Jake, and his comrades find it conceited and insulting that he claims that he loves Brett, and wishes to marry her in the accepted way. Another prominent reason why Cohn cannot fulfill his dream is that he upholds a romantic, moralistic, and idealistic conception of life, which his companions find unrealistic and outdated. By mixing up anytime and everywhere with all types of people, including Jews, bullfighters, homosexuals, and identifying herself with men, Brett indisputably demonstrates that, contrarily to Cohn, who is something of an exception in the group, she and the others have debunked the Puritan, Victorian, and middle-class ideals of patriotism, bravery, honor, glory, determination, faithfulness, love, friendship, chastity, marriage, motherhood, etc. Like Edna Pontellier, in Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* (1899), her thoughtless manners denote that she owns herself, and is not ready to sacrifice her life for anyone or for any imposed value system. In that respect, Brett embodies, along with Georgette, modernity and counter-culture, both terms understood as the absence of social and moral references, and as an offence against the proprieties. As "lost generation" women, they both stand for a "sexual revolution", a phenomenon considered to be an aftermath of World War I, but also of the Great Depression, of World War II, and of the threat of the nuclear war, along with the invention of the pill, respectively in the 1920s, 1930s, 1950s, and 1960s (Woodring, 1970: 39).

As a free-spirited woman who refuses to marry, while being unable to give up sex, Brett seduces, manipulates, and dominates her suitors. More cynical, she makes them hate and fight one another as if they were immature. Is she taking her revenge on men? Why? Anyway her frivolity and profligacy constantly arouse suspicion, jealousy, contempt, and violence, especially between the would-be friends: Cohn, Jake, Mike, and Romero. Brett appears thus as a sexual pervert, a smasher, a man ravager, who uses her charm and sex as pernicious weapons to destroy men, e. g. by making them lose their temper, dignity, and good moral conduct.

Beyond question, Cohn, the Jew, and Romero, the courageous and manly prodigy of bullfighting, are likely to be the greatest victims of her noxiousness inasmuch as she has shown them that the old values of reservation, formality, integrity, romance, discipline, self-esteem, and refinement which they epitomize, and that used to give life a meaning are obsolete, totally ill-timed. To gain Brett's respect, Romero, for instance, cheats: he smokes to look older, which is a dangerous signifying technique that can lead him to addiction and wreck his health. Brett also initiates the innocent bullfighter to sexuality, which in the long run, may have a negative impact on his brilliant career. The tinge of irony, here, is that, on account of her easy sexuality and strong power of machination, Brett has become an agent of destruction, exactly like the war and the mechanized weapons that have plagued the lives of millions of people.

II. PURPOSELESS WANDERING: AN EVIDENCE OF LOSTNESS

As the autodiegetic narrator appositely puts it, World War I "was in reality a calamity for civilization, and would have been better avoided" (*SAR*, 25). He could have added that so was it for man in the sense that the war destroyed him in every way. Indeed, the war made Hemingway's characters lose faith in themselves and in God, too, because of His wait-and-see attitude; it also caused them to believe that everything in the pitiless modern world is sham and meaningless. To turn over a new leaf, get over their trauma, wipe out of their minds the carnage of the war, and bury their horrible, albeit unforgettable past, they instinctively find solace in geographical movements and senseless activities. Leaving everything behind them, the war-broken expatriate artists, writers, and derelicts head for another places, where they hope life is more bearable, i. e., the milieu conspicuously referred to as "le lieu acceptable" (Laumonier, 2007: 20). The search of this place of deliverance is present in John Dos Passos's novel *One Man's Initiation – 1917* (1920), where, disgusted by the tedium of his condition, the protesting hero desperately asks God whether there is nowadays a single spot on earth where one can flee to live happily (Bluefarb, 1972: 61).

Hemingway, who believes that "unless you have geography, background, you have nothing" (Baker, 1962: 11), suddenly becomes place-conscious, scene-conscious, and fact-conscious, by representing the Left Bank of Paris and Pamplona as the cradle of such positive values as enlightenment, culture, peace, freedom, hope, and enjoyment. There, his war-wearied characters demonstrate, through their irresponsible manners, that wars alienate, disgrace, empty man of his humanity, and make life convey no meaning**.** It is clear, however, that turning their unconventional conduct into a lifestyle, rid of normative codes and spirituality, cannot be an adequate response to the damage of the war. On the contrary, such a false solution is one more symptom of mental aberration; it is a patent proof that their souls are severely shocked and wounded.

Functioning as anthropomorphous characters, the European countryside and cities - Paris, Bayonne, and Pamplona - command the characters' fate, state of mind, belief systems, feelings, attitudes, and discourses. Also, they provide the men and women for whom life is a lie, and is devoid of meaning, the liberty, independence, nightlife, and places for saying and doing crazy things to fill the vacuum, to find an alternative to their wrecked lives. James T. Farrell best paints what life was like in Paris and in Spain during the Roaring Twenties as well as the osmosis between the happy-go-lucky dawdlers and their idyllic environment, laying emphasis on the merry mood, gentle tone, and festive, euphoric, or holiday atmosphere:

> The Europe described in *The Sun also Rises* is a tourist Europe of the Twenties. Cafés, restaurants, hotels, particularly of the Left Bank, are the setting. When the action shifts to Spain, it is to permit a magnificent description of bull fights and a fiesta. The mood and attitude of the main characters is that of people on a vacation. They set out to do what people want to do on a vacation: they have love affairs, they drink, go fishing, and see new spectacles (Farrell, 1962: 5).

Since the modern world is dangerous, unpredictable, and senseless, characters who feel abused fulminate against the treachery, recklessness, and stupidity of their elders, considering that the war that shattered their lives broke out of their conscious or unconscious violation of the primitive American values of hope, good conscience, stability, peace, freedom, religiosity for which America has always been admired worldwide. Their grievances are all the more grounded as democrat Thomas Woodrow Wilson (1856-1924), elected President of the USA (1913-1921), called upon American people to be neutral during the period leading up to the Great War, arguing that the conflict was exclusively a European one. However, to their great surprise, he finally stampeded the nation into the war because of the unprecedented butcheries committed by the German army

as well as the despotic power of the government. Alfred Kazin explains with panache the disillusionment that stemmed from this unredeemed promise:

> [Disenchantment] is very characteristic of those American writers from the upper class, born on the eve of our century – Hemingway, Cummings, Edmund Wilson – whose childhoods were distinctly sheltered and protected, who grew up in stable families where the fathers were ministers (Cummings), lawyers (Wilson), doctors (Hemingway), the mothers the conscious transmitters of the American Puritan tradition in all the old certainty that Americans were more virtuous than other peoples (Kazin, 1969: v).

Brought up in the stable pre-war period, it is not surprising that the "lost generation" writers be disgusted with the unrecognizable image of post-war America. Their disenchantment which they invest their characters with is so unbearable that it culminated in an irresistible escape or quest for a "benign or, tolerable destiny" (Macauley and Lanning, 1987: 169). Unfortunately, they find this asylum in a delusive and fleeting world of fantasy that does not bode well for them and for their future.

To escape from the follies of the twentieth century, and rid themselves from false hopes, nonpolitical characters, who have been shaken by the war, seem to accept their ills through defiant attitudes, eccentricities, and peculiarities, reflective of the Jazz Age, especially among the youth. Forming a nihilistic clique, they reject the traditional codes, conventions, beliefs, and standards. The term nihilism, as Dostoevsky conceives of it, refers, on the existentialist axis, to "a consciously affirmed and accepted loss of belief in transcendent imperatives and secular values as guides to moral conduct, together with a feeling that there is no meaning resident – or, at least, further resident – in human existence" (Howe, 1970: 457). Nihilism, or pessimism and skepticism pushed to extremes echoes Flaubert for whom nothing exists, or Nietzsche, who uses the concept to posit that "all is senseless", or to designate "the disvaluation of values and the sense of bleakness which follows" (458). From a Freudian outlook, the disappointed characters' nihilism, or limitless social and moral disorder, may well be understood as an attempt for them to fulfill their early unsatisfied or repressed desires and to recreate their happy childhood.

Like John James Todd, the narrator-agent in William Boyd's *The New Confessions* (1987), Hemingway's deteriorated, hopeless, and "disaffiliated" (Cowley, 1973: 15) crowd is persuaded that the modern world is unstable, uncertain, incomplete, and perilous; that death is imminent; that everything is precarious and transient; and that life is not only a heavy burden, but it is also wearying, and conveys nothing. Driven to such despair, they hastily come to the conclusion that the only alternative left to them to give substance to their existence is to live for the pleasure of moment by carousing anytime, anywhere, anyhow, and at all costs. This spontaneous, evasive, and inappropriate reaction to the futility, hollowness, and preposterousness of everything and to the insecurity engendered by permanent violence, social injustices, and death reminds one of the author of *Ecclesiastes,* a book of the Hebraic Bible, from which Hemingway has extracted a passage he uses as an epigraph to *The Sun Also Rises* in order to show that daily life is humdrum because it is a farrago of nonsense and an eternal starting again. The routine and dullness which life is associated with may be clues to the explanation of the novel's puzzling title.

Appropriating the existentialist idea according to which man is unique and isolated in an indifferent and hostile universe, where he is responsible for his own actions, and is free to choose his destiny, the expatriates rashly infer that the only way to give their lives a meaning is to be on the spree here and now, eating good food, drinking good beverage, keeping good company, playing, etc. It is exactly because there is no perspective of happy days before them that they twiddle their thumbs, nourish no ambition, accomplish nothing, and do not feel the need to run after money. Through the narrator-agent's soporific lifestyle, Philip Young succinctly renders this loss of hope and self-denial as follows: "As a newspaper reporter [Jake Barnes] works just to eat and drink well on, and spends the rest of his time in cafés, or fishing, or watching bull fights" (Young, 1962: 7).

Not only do vagrant veterans drop serious activities, but they do not want to look back on the past either, for it is reminiscent of some dreadful events, emblematic of the degradation of man. No less detrimental, the war has silenced them because it was so gruesome that recalling it might exacerbate their world-weariness, and even cause nervous breakdown. Similarly, they do not wish to think of the future since

that other cross-section of life is uncertain, and may be more threatening and traumatizing than the violence that has jeopardized their existence. To fight against their angst, they cannot find anything better than amusements. They act as if time were suspended or rooted to the spot, and loathe saddling themselves up with ideals, moral values, constraining projects, or existential questions. For instance, when Jake, who describes himself as a "rotten Catholic" (*SAR*, 103), and a Catholic "technically" (129), but not spiritually, "wonder[s] what day God created the chicken" (126), Bill Gorton, his fellow American war veteran, sums up the gist of the hedonistic philosophy they should adopt as a breviary: "Oh," …, "how should we know? We should not ask question. Our stay on earth is not for long. Let us rejoice and believe and give thanks" (*SAR*, 126).

There is the life of renunciation which has urged the hollow characters to wander around like lost souls, not to be filled with high ambition, not to aspire after knowledge, wisdom, fame, or well-being, on the whole to fool and to ruin themselves. James Farrell timely portrays them as follows: "The main characters have only a meager past. They are escaping from their past and usually do not wish even to talk or to think of it. They live for the present, constantly searching for new and fresh sensations. They do not really think; even Jake scarcely thinks about his own impotence" (Farrell, 1962: 6).

One may thus admit that Hemingway's escapist characters are lost, to speak like Gertrude Stein, since their peripatetic way of life as well as their licentiousness, unreasonableness, rootlessness, and aimlessness proceed from an error of judgment which inevitably results in failure. Dominique Berthet, for whom random wandering, be it physical or spiritual, is an unproductive form of escapism that cannot provide genuine pleasure and spiritual regeneration, lends weight to this argument with particular clarity: **«**L'errance negative», [dit-elle], **«** envisage l'errant comme un être égaré, désoeuvré, à la dérive, sorte de SDF de notre période contemporaine […] Être errant c'est être, à un moment donné, sans attache particulière, allant d'un lieu à un autre, en apparence sans véritable but» (Berthet, 2007 : 10).

The rovers are homeless, partly because they are cut off from their homes and past, and partly because they "have little or no affiliation with a community [in Europe], where [they] would feel more at home" (Bluefarb, 1972: 116). For sure, wandering implies homelessness, and both are the signals for lostness. Going from one place to another restlessly is fruitless and, accordingly, must be differentiated from purposive movements, undertaken willingly, spurred on by ambition, and guided by well devised plans. In short, everything in the expatriates' lives indicates escapism, and not escape, the latter term being an alleviating and enriching type of inward journey, often associated with a rite of passage, at the end of which the alienated character metamorphoses himself, e. g. he grows up morally, and promises to reform himself and his society.

III. AIMLESS FLIGHT AS AN IMPASSE

The irony about Hemingway's war-wounded characters' quest for an alternative to real life is that the strategies they deploy to reach this objective are not salutary. Since life has not come up to their expectations, they irretrievably seek safety and happiness in flight, in the eschewing of their traditional values, and in a trivial lifestyle. Devoid of wit, courage, conviction, and a sense of purpose, they succumb to despair, passivity, inaction, lack of initiative, and intemperance in sensual pleasures, which inexorably precipitates their lostness and degeneracy. It is to be regretted that instead of drawing from the old values the resources they need to face reality, though unpleasant it may be, they wretchedly abnegate everything, deny themselves, and give way to self-deception. As his name timely suggests, Jake, or Jacob, and his comrades have jacked in everything vital, especially work as well as any attempt to redefine and to reconstruct their selves.

Irrefutably, World War I uprooted the old values of innocence, decency, morality, and faith; it made life bear no meaning, and led its survivors to become morally and psychologically paralyzed. Because they are not committed to anything, do not believe in anything, and are not in pursuit of anything, their way of life is neither initiatory nor reviving insofar as they cannot make felicitous choices and decisions, or act properly. Symbolically, the dissipated characters' rambling, without any purpose, is suggestive of the biblical story of the forty-year wandering of the children of Israel in the wilderness (Stout, 1983: 107). Their erratic motion is equally evocative of Christopher New Man, Henry James's protagonist in *The American* (1877), who, being emotionally distraught after giving up his project to marry Claire de Cintre, aimlessly and restlessly wanders because he is unable to formulate other goals to fill his empty life. The same holds true for Lily Bart in Edith

Wharton's *House of Mirth* (1905). Distracted by anxiety, she, too, is always on the road without any destination or distinct motivation. In the same vein, Hemingway's characters' resignation or defeatist spirit in a contemporary world dominated by destructive forces over which they have no control reminds one of the three women, who submit to their fate in *The Three Lives* (1909) by Gertrude Stein.

Unlike the traditional "venturers" or "questers", whose journeys are motivated by such goals as the search of freedom, spiritual enlightenment, truth, self-discovery, or material success, the comings and goings of Hemingway's war-exhausted characters are hazardous and valueless. On this point, it is worth stressing that the zest for random motion dictated by the oppressive sense of emptiness and senselessness of life is the trademark of the "lost generation". It constitutes, for instance, the controlling pattern of Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* (1925) and *Tender is the Night* (1935), John Doss Passos's *Manhattan Transfer* (1925), and, more particularly, Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises*, as Janis P. Stout puts it to the point:

> Hemingway's disillusioned and dissolute characters, trapped in a self-imposed exile, ramble from cafe to café or from country to country as momentary impulses move them and their bank accounts permit. But despite the larger action of constant motion, even adventure, in its specifics their activity is depressingly unvarying. Wherever they are, they drink, smoke, make love idly, and fall into squabbles with no hope that they are progressing toward any decisive action or any stable relationship – toward any goal at all. One place is much the same as another; they are, in effect, lost in a moral landscape of monotony with no ability to make significant distinctions or to choose a direction (Stout, 1983: 108).

Contrary to Ralph Waldo Emerson, in *Nature* (1836), Henry David Thoreau, in *Walden; or Life in the Woods* (1854), and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, in *Les Rêveries du promeneur solitaire* (1782), whose hopeful flights from depraved society and civilization into the uncorrupted world of nature are controlled and goal-directed because they intend to learn and to preserve their identity, dignity, and integrity, Hemingway's lost characters' chronic wandering is hopeless, for it does not involve any moral, intellectual, or spiritual growth, and neither does it consider any homecoming. Maybe their refusal to return home is justified by the controversial idea that "in American literature, the return home signifies defeat, frustration, the giving up of freedom" (Stout, 1983: 66).

It must be noticed that even those who are not war veterans are seriously ravaged by the emotional and psychological effects of the repugnant war. Cohn is a case in point. He can hardly socialize with the American, British, and Greek veterans, fundamentally because they do not share the same traumatizing war experiences. As a foil to Jake, the focal character, and his travelling sufferers, who have all been rendered biologically or morally impotent, and for whom pre-war values are out-worn, Cohn stills hold a primitive conception of life. Contrarily to the former, who stand for modernity and disenchantment, he is the embodiment of hope and a traditional code of ethics encompassing courtesy, rectitude, purity, sobriety, honor, refinement, genuine love and friendship, invariability, in a word, all the ideals that have been shelved by the Great War.

Cohn's unfailing faith in the future and his dream to marry Brett substantiate his being considered by his casual fellows to be an outsider and to be damn stupid. The latter qualifier does fit him because if the "h" is omitted, Cohn becomes "con", a French term meaning to be as daft as a brush. Be that as it may, his innocence or naivety irritates, estranges all his anti-Semitic comrades: on the one hand, they think that as a Jew, his presence among them is outrageous; on the other hand, they find him terribly softy, too backward-looking, and deadly annoying, especially because he totally ignores the new codes about the modern age and, particularly, about love. Verily, Cohn or "Con" fails to understand that in modern culture, sex is no longer seen as a step toward a stable marriage and family. He does not realize either that sexuality does not require romantic love, i. e., commitment or emotional involvement. For these reasons, Mike makes him feel insecure and ashamed, looking down on him as follows: "Do you think you amount to something, Cohn? Do you think you belong here among us" (*SAR*, 181)?

Similarly, Brett disparagingly reinforces that Cohn is not fit to belong to their circle, for he is not one of them. This offensive remark proves that in the eyes of the woman, who is lost to all the moral values, and who has become insensible to everything sacred, classical values are synonymous with being behind the times,

with comedy, and even with sin. In actual fact, to affirm that Cohn does not belong to their set is a truism because, in contrast to them, he takes life seriously, and has a code of ethics that guides his behaviour.

One can well imagine that Cohn's doglike attachment to Brett, which is the reason why Mike, who cannot hide his jealousy, insultingly calls him a "steer" (*SAR*, 146), or castrated male, forgetting that it is Jake who is really the damp squib, is the best illustration of his real need to have someone, who sincerely loves him, keeps him good company, plays the role of a confidante, and treats him as an equal to help him overcome his inferiority complex and insecurity. Unfortunately, Brett is not the right woman for this purpose since she, too, is sexually, morally, and emotionally shattered like Jake. Presumably, the brutal death of her first lover is not alien to her outré behaviour, to her becoming restive, manly, and fancy-free. Brett's passion for love and her sense of femininity have, surely, been repressed, even suppressed by her unsuccessful, barren, and chaotic love experiences, as can be noticed through her identifying herself as a "chap", her foul language, and her transvestism. An interest in onomastics reveals that it is certainly because she lives in a male-dominated circle, but also dresses up and puts on a cap as men that she is suitably called Brett, a shortening of "brethren", the old use for "brothers".

CONCLUSION

Altogether, *The Sun Also Rises* is essentially a novel about post-war trauma and disenchantment which end in escapism, but not escape. The tale is essentially about escapism because, to evade from the endemic violence, turbulences, weariness, turmoil, emptiness, and absurdity of life in the modern world, and to find a meaning to their lives as well, characters, who are shockingly wounded in every way, go into instinctive exile, and mistakenly engage in sensual pleasures, idleness, restless and random movements, without any discernable objective, vision, or inner direction.

Manifestly, no fallacy can be more fatal than believing that going to and fro endlessly and aimlessly, drinking to excess, and having promiscuous sexual intercourse can give a real meaning to life. One of the limits of these idiosyncratic mannerisms is that they are so rooted in fear, abysmal desperation, passivity, idleness, renunciation, and nihilism that they are, beyond doubt, a dazzling manifestation of lostness that cannot result in anything save failure. As a way of life without orientation, finding moral support in trifles to evade reality cannot be a viable strategy to work out one's salvation. Instead, it is to shun one's responsibility, delude oneself, act rashly, lack stamina, confess one's powerlessness, and feel defeated. Because it is a desperate flight, futile life can neither be cathartic, nor catalytic, nor therapeutic, nor prophylactic in the sense that it cannot possibly endow one with the values necessary to confront the unpredictability and boisterousness of life.

Also, escapism is a fake survival subterfuge, for, though it is spurred on by the discrepancy between life as it is and life as it should be, its outcome is always a falling through. As an expression of hopelessness and lostness, trivialities cannot engender rebirth and neither can it help find a true meaning to life or learn to put up with actual circumstances. Through their disordered way of life, wanderers in exile draw themselves more deeply into the abyss, or labyrinth of the senselessness of life which they are fleeing from. Their despondency resonates not only in their desultory thoughts, wild behaviour, dull tone, laconic conversations and language as empty as their lives, but also in the enigmatic title of the novel as well as in the lack of a hero and of a satisfactory ending.

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