

# The Identity Issue in The Great Gatsby and The Sun Also Rises

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Undergraduate thesis / Završni rad

2017

*Degree Grantor / Ustanova koja je dodijelila akademski / stručni stupanj:* **Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences / Sveučilište Josipa Jurja Strossmayera u Osijeku, Filozofski fakultet**

*Permanent link / Trajna poveznica:* <https://urn.nsk.hr/urn:nbn:hr:142:818738>

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*Download date / Datum preuzimanja:* **2021-09-22**



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Studij: Dvopredmetni sveučilišni preddiplomski studij engleskog jezika i  
književnosti i pedagogije

Silvija Žalac

**Problem identiteta u djelima *Veliki Gatsby* i *A sunce izlazi***

Završni rad

Mentor: doc.dr.sc. Jasna Poljak Rehlicki

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Znanstveno polje: filologija

Znanstvena grana: anglistika

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Bachelor's Thesis

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**Abstract:**

Early twentieth century was the time of change, industrialization, urbanization, and World War I, all of which changed the world forever. These significant events reflected upon the United States as well as on the American spirit, the old values of the American Dream. Postwar years, together with prohibition and immigration, were hard for the American society. Authors such as F. Scott Fitzgerald and Ernest Hemingway managed to describe those years of change each in their own unique way. Characters in their novels *The Great Gatsby* and *The Sun Also Rises* are a great representation of those turbulent years. Through the characters in their stories, it is evident that the American people lost what was once familiar to them and are in pursuit of some new values. This paper will focus on the characters of Jay Gatsby and Jake Barnes. The analysis will include the examination of Jay as a self-made man, a believer in the Dream who ended tragically, and Jake as a representative of the Lost Generation, of people scared by the violence of the war. Both characters try to form new identities because things they valued before cannot survive in the modern world that the United States was now a part of.

**Key words:** identity, World War I, the American Dream, Jay Gatsby, Jake Barnes

## **Introduction**

This paper provides an analysis of the character of Jay Gatsby from Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* and the character of Jake Barnes from Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises*. The paper focuses on how the two characters from their identity and values, and their struggle to survive in the new modern world of the 1920s United States. The characters are analyzed based on the time and place in which they lived, their surroundings, and past events.

There are three major parts of the paper: the history of the American Twenties, the identity of Jay Gatsby, and the identity of Jake Barnes. The first part, American Identity in the Early Twentieth Century, provides a historical overview of the early twentieth century. It focuses on the massive events and changes of that time, such as World War I and industrialization, as well as on how they affected the American society and shattered the American Dream. The second part deals with *The Great Gatsby* and the protagonist of the novel, Jay Gatsby. The analysis chronologically follows Jay's life explaining all the important aspects of his identity. It deals with him being a traditional hero of the transitional time, a self-made man, a bootlegger, an influential personality, and a man seeking his true love. The third part focuses on Hemingway and the protagonist of *The Sun Also Rises*, Jake Barnes. The analysis connects Jake to the Lost Generation, and portrays him as true Hemingwayesque character influenced by the death of love and masculinity.



## 1. American Identity in the Early Twentieth Century

The transition to the modernist era, the late nineteenth century and the early twentieth century, was a time of many changes for the American society. It was the time of movements and fighting for rights of any kind, the time of World War I, massive population growth, and prohibition. According to the author Jillson, the society finally offered women new social and economic opportunities, and by 1920s their struggle was over as the suffrage was won. Also, there was hope for minorities and Native Americans since the New Deal was supposed to lessen their exclusion. Society started to change and be more open to differences. Unfortunately, ethnic and racial discrimination remained up until World War II (158).

The American Twentieths were very turbulent years especially because World War I. As author Cincotta states in his book *An Outline of American History*, the outbreak of war came as a shock to the American people. The war, at first, seemed remote but soon came swiftly to the United States as Western Allies needed munition. The industry of the United States was at that time mildly depressed but as war came it started to prosper again (244). Furthermore, as author Huskey in his essay “The Identity Crisis of the Modernist Era” explains, the United States was still trying to find its place in the world. The World War I was the first opportunity of the nation to enter the international level, with its involvement in helping Europe (18). The United States officially entered the war in April 1917, and by October 1918 over 1,750,000 soldiers were deployed to France. The United States involvement, however was brief as the armistice with Germany was concluded on November 11, 1918 (Cincotta 245).

The transition from war to peace in the United States was difficult:

The immediate economic boom right after the war led to high expectations that were quickly sunk once the postwar economy returned to normal. In turn, labor became dissatisfied with the rising costs of living, long hours and unsympathetic management. In 1919 alone, over 4 million workers went on strike. (Cincotta 248)

Furthermore, in 1920 Prohibition came to power, banning manufacturing, selling or transporting of alcoholic beverages. In protest the society started a revolution which produced the “Jazz Age, the era of excess, the Roaring ‘20s” (Cincotta 253). As author Jillson explains in his book *Pursuing the American dream*, during the Roaring Twenties, a time of social experimentation and economic expansion, more and more people came to live in the cities and

became a part of the consumer society. Moreover, this period is marked by new monopolies and trusts, by generation of industrial titans. Names like Rockefeller, Carnegie, and Morgan led and epitomized the new American business (158). Also, the author portrays the seriousness of the massive economic changes the United States was under:

The rich men and the big corporations have become too wealthy and powerful for their official standing in the American life.

Either these economic monsters will destroy the system of ideas, institutions, and practices out of which they have issued or else be destroyed by them. (Jillson 159)

The values changed as money and wealth came above everything else in life. F. Scott Fitzgerald once explained what these years were all about: “America was going on the greatest, gaudiest spree in history. The whole golden boom was in the air- its splendid generosities, its outrageous corruptions and the torturous death of the old America” (Jillson 161). These massive changes affected people because the things they once knew and valued were disappearing, “the American people were tired of issues, sick at heart of ideals, and weary of being noble” (Cincotta 249). The United States turned upside down. Therefore, after the war, many people moved away from the United States. Both Fitzgerald and Hemingway were one of those people. Even though away from the United States, they were still mentally a part of their country and their protagonists have all of the characteristics of American people in the early twentieth century. The two writers were a “part of a small but influential movement of writers and intellectuals dubbed the ‘Lost Generation,’ who were shocked by the carnage of World War I and dissatisfied with what they perceived to be the materialism and spiritual emptiness of life in the United States” (Cincotta 253). Lost and confused by the turbulent times of moral corruption they wrote about these problems each in their own way. One placing the setting in the New York City and one in France and Spain, their characters suffer similar moral struggles and try to establish new identities to fit in the world after all of the changes.

Consequently, people trying to establish their identity marked this period. As author Huskey points out, the whole nation in the early twentieth century was changing; the schools were teaching nationalistic ideas and emphasized citizenship by stressing the importance of being a good citizen. The United States was then still a young country building its identity. The identity of the nation as a whole reflected the individual identities of those that composed

it (18). However, the identities of people were not unified due to massive migrations towards the United States at that time. Some people enjoyed great, luxurious lives while others still did not have a right to vote and be free. Author Huskey explains that the main characteristic of the United States was its use of capital to solve any situation. Capitalism and material wealth became the driving forces in achieving its goals (17). According to the author Lewis in his essay “Money, Love, and Aspiration in *The Great Gatsby*”, this time of transition between the old values and the new values produce the most complex and seminal literary works. “In this respect the 1920s bridge the gap between the older, simpler, more naive and idealistic America and the bewildering, disparate, rootless, cynical America of the present” (Lewis 42). Both literary works, *The Great Gatsby* and *The Sun Also Rises*, which will be further analyzed in this paper, portrays these transitional characteristics as protagonists struggle with their identities. In the opening part of *The Great Gatsby* character Nick Carraway perfectly explains this transitional time:

“In my younger and more vulnerable years my father gave me some advice that I’ve been turning over in my mind ever since.

‘Whenever you feel like criticizing any one,’ he told me, ‘just remember that all the people in this world haven’t had the advantages that you’ve had’

In consequence, I’m inclined to reserve all judgments, a habit that has opened up many curious natures to me and also made me the victim of not a few veteran bores” (Fitzgerald 1).

He distinctly separates the time when his father lived and the time he lives in. The whole story being a flashback of Nick’s memories, he can now see and understand that even though father’s advice is moral and good, the values and standards have changed. The consequences of the war were global. The monarchies shattered and the new countries reshaped the face of Europe. They also planted a seed for the next global slaughter. Even though these changes and the loss of faith mainly influenced Europe, the consequences of the war reached the United States as well and destroyed the old American values.

## 2. Fitzgerald and *The Great Gatsby*

*The Great Gatsby* is arguably one of the greatest American novels. Interestingly, the novel itself was a commercial disappointment when it was published in the 1925. Some time had to pass in order for the book to get the audience and recognition it deserves. “It is one of those novels that so richly evoke the texture of their time that they become, more than literary classics; they become a supplementary or even a substitute form of history” (Brucoli 6). Moreover, as author Chase explains in his book *The American Novel and Its Tradition*, what gave the book its popularity was Fitzgerald’s odd combination of romance and realism. Even though *The Great Gatsby* is a story of a man pursuing his dream of getting his love back, it provides the readers with a great sense of the American 1920s character and spirit. The novel represents different layers of the society, from the extremely rich to the extremely poor (162).

In order to understand what Jay Gatsby and the novel itself is about it is important to differentiate various layers of society and class. Author Huskey states how Fitzgerald explained these differences by introducing four layouts: New York City, the peninsula of the Long Island where there are East and West Egg, and “The Valley of Ashes” (16). Both New York City and Long Island are affected by moral crisis and capitalism, and there live the rich. The West Egg represents the “new money,” while East Egg represents the “old money.” Jay Gatsby is one of the representatives of the “new money,” a man who came from a working class family but managed to gain much material wealth and a better social status. The “old money” are people like Daisy and Tom, people that came from a long line of wealthy and influential families. “The Valley of Ashes” is actually an industrial dump where the working poor people live. There, there are no illusions like in the city and the Eggs.

In addition, there is another classification based on Nick Carraway’s line: “There are only the pursued, the pursuing, the busy and the tired” (Fitzgerald 59). The pursued are the old money, admired by others, epitomized in the characters of Tom and Daisy. The pursuing are the new money, like Gatsby, who try to be accepted and internalized unto the old money. The busy one in the novel is Nick, a middle-class, hard-working man and the tired are broken down characters like Wilson who try to merely survive among the ashes. Both classifications might get blurred throughout the novel as each character strives for something more in life, however, they are unable to break free from their position in the society. Furthermore, to understand the character of Jay Gatsby it is very important to differentiate these parts of the

society. His identity and values can be explained by observing his surroundings, his past, and his environment.

## 2.1. The Identity of Jay Gatsby

### 2.1.1. The Traditional James Gatz

In order to understand the various identities of Jay Gatsby, it is important to start from his original identity, from the identity of James Gatz. James Gatz was an ordinary boy born in North Dakota who lived on a farm. He despised his life there and wanted to do better. He was a dreamer, a believer in the purity of the American dream. He dedicated his life to gaining material wealth and social status in order to move away from the life of a farmer. Nick later on in the novel explains how Gatz had this Platonic concept of himself (75). He created an ideal version of himself and tried to live up to that ideal. Moreover, as author Lewis argues in his essay “Money, Love, and Aspiration in *The Great Gatsby*”: “no outside context exists to create meaning, self-created man turns to the past, for he can know that. For Gatsby and for the novel, the past is crucial” (Lewis 47). Gatsby’s identity and all of his actions in the story are connected to this quotation. As Lewis explains, Gatsby formed everything in his life on this creation of himself. He could not move forward but only desperately tried to rewrite the past (47).

In addition, the concept of a self-made man, introduced by Benjamin Franklin, influenced Gatz immensely. Fitzgerald reveals how he lived by a strict self-disciplinary schedule just as Franklin did that clearly demonstrates the self-made man spirit:

Rise from bed . . . . . 6.00 A.M.  
Dumbbell exercise and wall-scaling . . . . 6.15–6.30 "  
Study electricity, etc . . . . . 7.15–8.15 "  
Work . . . . . 8.30–4.30 P.M.  
Baseball and sports . . . . . 4.30–5.00 "  
Practice elocution, poise and how to attain it 5.00–6.00 "  
Study needed inventions . . . . . 7.00–9.00 "  
GENERAL RESOLVES  
No wasting time at Shafters or {a name, indecipherable}  
No more smokeing or chewing  
Bath every other day

Read one improving book or magazine per week

Save \$5.00 {crossed out} \$3.00 per week

Be better to parents (Fitzgerald 134)

Furthermore, it is evident from his schedule that Gatz tried to incorporate the thirteen values Franklin lived by in his own life. Franklin listed those values in his autobiography in the following order: temperance, silence, order, resolution, frugality, industry, sincerity, justice, moderation, cleanliness, tranquility, chastity, humility (Bigelow 215-216). Franklin's wish was "to live without committing any fault at any time," however, he understood that it was not possible to improve everything at once (Bigelow 213):

My intention being to acquire the habitude of all these virtues, I judg'd it would be well not to distract my attention by attempting the whole at once, but to fix it on one of them at a time; and, when I should be master of that, then to proceed to another, and so on, till I should have gone thro' the thirteen. (Bigelow 216)

Gatz, although trying very hard to follow Franklin's example, was not able to master all the virtues. The events that followed in his life made him take a path that was not morally acceptable by Franklin.

As explained in the novel, later on, Gatz attended college of St. Olaf in the southern Minnesota. In order to pay for his education, he worked as a janitor at the time. Through this whole period Gatz was unhappy and despised his future. Then, after two weeks of college, he dropped out and drifted back to Lake Superior where he encountered Dan Cody. Dan Cody was extremely wealthy fifty-year-old man that provided Gatz a place to stay on his yacht (75-76). By this time James Gatz had this vision of Jay Gatsby as the new version of himself. As Nick says:

It was James Gatz who had been loafing along the beach that afternoon in a torn green jersey and a pair of canvas pants, but it was already Jay Gatsby who borrowed a rowboat, pulled out to the *Tuolomee*, and informed Cody that a wind might catch him and break him up in half an hour. (Fitzgerald 74-75)

Gatz's new character was well-formed by then. Also, he was promised a lot of money from Dan Cody that would enable him to create a better life for himself.

Unfortunately, he was deceived and left with nothing. His next steps take him to the military and Camp Taylor where he meets Daisy Fay. As Fitzgerald explains in the novel, Daisy was the first nice girl Gatsby met and so he fell in love with her (114). He liked everything about her, but mostly the ideal of money and love she represented. It is important to understand that at that time Gatsby was still very unhappy, because every chance he gets to alter his life fails and leaves him empty handed. Consequently, she became his ultimate dream, with having her he would have everything he needed in life. Daisy represented all the things he never had, and he was immensely in love with her: “He knew that Daisy was extraordinary, but he didn’t realize just how extraordinary a ‘nice’ girl could be. She vanished into her rich house, full life, leaving Gatsby- nothing. He felt married to her, that was all” (Fitzgerald 115). Gatsby’s participation in World War I and his going to Oxford University separated them for few years, which resulted in Daisy’s marriage with Tom Buchanan (Fitzgerald 116).

#### 2.1.2. The Transitional Jay Gatsby

After returning from Oxford, Gatsby waited five years before trying to contact Daisy. Gatsby changed himself in order to fit into her world. He abandons his former identity to be more like her. Moreover, he tries to unite with her upper class by gaining immense material wealth, but his ways of getting rich were not that pure and right. However, it was the whole American way of thinking that changed after the war. Author Brauer talks about these changes in his work “Jay Gatsby and the Prohibition Gangster as Business.” He explains how “by early 1920s, the meaning of success in America was in transition from the traditional notion that linked work with virtue to a more ‘secular understanding of the American Dream’ that was entirely economic, free of moral obligation” (Brauer 53). Furthermore, “the old ideal of the moral pursuit of wealth had been replaced by new visions of sudden and massive enrichment” (Brauer 54). Instead of working hard to achieve his goals, he worked with gangsters and bootleggers. According to Brauer, the fact is that writers no longer portrayed criminals as people working on margins of the culture, but portrayed them as parts of the mainstream culture. Jay was a criminal but he is also the protagonist of the story. In fact, all this shows how the Dream itself got corrupted. The way someone achieved his or her dream was no longer important, the outcome was the thing that matters (51). Furthermore, Huskey clarifies how this focus on materialism can explain Gatsby as having simply American identity. Americanism is the national identity of all Americans. Because of capitalism and its huge part in the American society and in the story, the American identity is characterized by

materialism, wealth, and desire for more (17). Gatsby fits this profile to some extent. In order to get closer to Daisy he had to achieve much wealth, which allowed him to acquire a house in the West Egg.

Moreover, Gatsby lived in the West Egg, which is a symbolic place as all things are in the story. His house was situated right across Daisy's house in the East Egg, looking at the green light at her dock. Jay Gatsby was the mysterious man living in a luxurious mansion that not many people knew. He managed to escape from the farm life of his family and created a new name that represented him as a successful man everyone seeks to meet.

The thing he was mostly known for were the parties he hosted. It did not matter if the people on the party knew Gatsby personally, it was important that they were there. The "casual moths" (Fitzgerald 58), as Nick called these people, were attracted by the glamour, the mysteriousness, and the power that could be sensed in the mansion. They all wondered who Gatsby really is, but no one knew the truth. That is how speculations began: "Somebody told me they thought he killed a man once. I don't think it's so much that; it's more that he was a German spy during the war" (Fitzgerald 32-33). His identity was unknown to any of these people and yet they are in his house. The fact is, according to author Huskey, that neither Gatsby himself knows who he is. He lives his life in an attempt to do better but is actually nowhere. To explain, the environment and his surroundings play a great role. The West Egg represents the "new money" as explained in the beginning. However, Jay does not belong there fully as he constantly tries to evolve to the East Egg to be closer to Daisy. He succeeds in a way through his parties. No matter where are people from, they all come to socialize at his mansion (16). Clearly, as author Weinstein explains it, Fitzgerald put self-creation and self-projection at the heart of the novel. The parties are just one aspect of it. People attending the parties have a chance to alter their identity to be someone with no proof or evidence (27). Fitzgerald points out how, at that time in the United States people have been involved in "the creation of belief, the making of something from nothing, the sovereign power of language and imagination against the paltriness of evidence" (Weinstein 28). That is why the lines get blurred and seemingly give Gatsby a chance to achieve his goal. Still, he never realizes his goal. Throughout the whole novel Jay Gatsby never managed to attain a certain identity that would enable him to be with Daisy.

Overall, Gatsby tried very hard to remake the world, his past, and everything standing on his way towards achieving the Dream. At the beginning, he, like Franklin himself,



followed strict rules in order to become happier, to be a self-made man. For example, he valued the thirteen virtues Franklin wrote, some of them are:

“7. Sincerity. Use no hurtful deceit; think innocently and justly.

8. Justice. Wrong none by doing injuries, or omitting the benefits that are your duty.

9. Moderation. Avoid extremes” (Bigelow 215-216).

However, he failed many times and life kept leaving him with nothing. For instance, the time when he was denied the heritage Cody left him. He started to adjust the rules of the traditional Gatz slowly trying to transition to the society after World War I. The three-exemplar virtues show just how much Gatsby has changed. Sincerity and justice stopped being important once he realized that in order to be closer to Daisy he had to get rich quickly, so he started working with criminals. Also, moderation was unfamiliar to him with all the luxurious and extreme parties he hosted.

Lastly, all that Gatsby is, or in reality wants to be, is connected to Daisy. Over the years Gatsby changed always having in mind Daisy and his love for her. He idealized her, he made her his dream, and she was that something he needed in order for his life to be fulfilled. Nevertheless, once he finally got a chance to spend some time with her, it is not as he had imagined. Author Weinstein in his work “Fiction as Greatness” writes about the illusions and the purpose of Gatsby’s dream, and explains how “Daisy does not measure up, because Gatsby's dream cannot be outfitted with checks and balances, or any kind of external referent; it is, instead, supremely autonomous, auto-generative, fed from within” (Weinstein 26). In Gatsby’s mind she is something else, perfection, ideal, something greater than she is in reality. Due to this, as Chase explains, some authors think of Gatsby as a legend, a “Young Man from the Provinces” (163). They consider the story to be the archetype of the European legend that Fitzgerald modified according to the American ideals: “There is mystery about his birth, the purpose of his quest is to enter life, which he does by launching a campaign to conquer the great world that regards him as an insignificant outsider” (Chase 163). He indeed has many traits of a legend or a hero that in a way give insight in who he really is: “He shares their ideal of innocence, escape, and the purely personal code of conduct. He derives his values not from the way of the world but from an earlier pastoral ideal” (Chase 165). It is important to understand how his intentions were genuine. His every act was made so that Daisy, his ideal, was safe next to him. Even though Gatsby was involved in criminal activities

to do so, he does not seem to be a corrupted character. Even Nick says: "They're a rotten crowd. You're worth the whole damn bunch put together" (Fitzgerald 118). But the unfortunate part is, as the author Chase says, Gatsby lived too late. His values and ways of living did not fit in the society after the World War I (1918). Because of it, he was lost, always looking for a way to fit in.

All in all, Fitzgerald ingeniously works on this connection of belief and illusion that in the end show Gatsby's identity: "To be free from the constraints of proof or evidence, to alter one's identity, to be multiple rather than single, to overcome the laws of time and space and background: such are precisely the virtues of fiction, of the American Dream, and of Jay" (Weinstein 27). Gatsby's identity cannot be ascribed to one part of him, but exactly the opposite:

Like the ancient gods for whose birth multiple legends can be found, so Gatsby is at once "a nephew or a cousin of Kaiser Wilhelm's," "a German spy during the war," "an Oxford man," "a bootlegger," "a person who killed man." Mysterious, elusive, multiple, "Mr. Nobody from Nowhere," Gatsby has no single referent. He is not there when you look for him, and mysteriously present when least expected, such as in Nick's first encounter, or when Nick arranges his meeting with Daisy. He seems endlessly replicated mirrored in the text, and there is something apt in Daisy's admiring claim: "You resemble the advertisement of the man." (Weinstein 28-29)

Gatsby's ideal and his pursuit of the Dream brought him to his death. He is the best example of what happens to uncorrupted people trying to achieve more in the world of the 1920s America. As Nick describes it: "A new world, material without being real, where poor ghosts, breathing dreams like air, drifted fortuitously about" (Fitzgerald 124). Gatsby, the poor ghost, who lived by his dreams, could not compete with the morally and economically corrupted. He was indeed a traditional hero who lived in a transitional world and disordered society, the Roaring 20s.

### **3. Hemingway and *The Sun Also Rises***

Ernest Hemingway is an esteemed writer that produced everything from plays, short stories, and novels. He is widely known by some of his later works in life like *Farewell to Arms* and *The Old Man and the Sea*. However, as author Rovit explains in his work on Hemingway, *The Sun Also Rises* is considered to be, by many critics, one of Hemingway's most wholly satisfying book. The book was published in 1926 and was his first real attempt at a novel. Hemingway marked his style and themes with this novel. In *The Sun Also Rises* Hemingway explores themes that become his brand-mark (341). Some of these are “the pragmatic ideal of ‘grace under pressure,’ the concept of ‘style’ as a moral and ethical virtue, and the blunt belief or determination that some form of individual heroism was still possible in the increasingly mechanized and bureaucratic world of the twentieth century” (Rovit 341).

#### **3.1. The Identity of Jake Barnes**

The protagonist of the novel, Jake Barnes narrates the story that is placed in Paris in 1924, where he works as a journalist. Before Paris and journalism, he served in the World War I just like many of his friends. Jake narrates quite objectively, but reveals little to the reader. The sentences and dialogs are short; everything seems quite plain. The characters in the story ostensibly have no greater purpose in life; all that they do is eat, drink, have fun, and talk. The reason for that is because Hemingway “knowingly restricted himself in order to strip down, compress, and energize his writing. Prose, he once said, is not interior decoration but architecture, and the Baroque is over. His best work stands as a striking application to writing of Mies van der Rohe's architectural maxime: ‘Less is more’” (Weeks 1). Even though the plot itself is plain, the reasons why characters all became so are important and complex. Jake internally is a complex person with lots of issues that form his identity. Furthermore, it is very hard to remove Hemingway himself from the stories. Jake is “like his creator, he served in the war and is a journalist, outdoorsman, tennis amateur, and bullfighting aficionado” (Onderdonk 62). Therefore, while analyzing the character of Jake Barnes, it will be inevitable to write about Hemingway himself.

##### **3.1.1. The Lost Generation**

According to author Rovit, many critics say that *The Sun Also Rises* can be explained through two viewpoints. First sees Hemingway as someone who is disgusted by people's lack of self-discipline by creating a character who stands on the margins of the group narrating all

that is happening. Second concentrates on the World War I as historical event that is the reason for the wretched lives of the characters (344). “Jake Barnes has been rendered sexually impotent by his wound in the war. The sustaining values of western civilization- religious, ethical, philosophical- have been exploded” (Rovit 344).

With Hemingway being one of the representatives of the Lost Generation, *The Sun Also Rises* is essentially a book about “loss of one’s desires, one’s loves, one’s life. Loss as a ‘given,’ as a fatal limitation on open possibilities and opportunities” (Rovit 342). In 1934 Hemingway wrote a letter to Fitzgerald that can help explain his focus while writing: “Forget your personal tragedy. We are all bitched from the start and you especially have to be hurt like hell before you can write seriously. But when you get the damned hurt use it-don’t cheat with it. Be as faithful to it as a scientist” (Onderdonk 61). The loss that he talks about is what characterized his generation. The consequences of war were massive on the American society and so authors put that pain into their writings.

Hemingway focuses on the hopeless lives of his characters. They live in a centerless world in which they only talk and drink, without any grater purpose (Rovit 345). “This is not only a world of men without women, but of men without jobs, men without parents or children, men without homes or even communities. It is a world in which the soldier desert or else operate as guerillas, for there are no lasting affiliations in the world of isolates” (Weeks 3). The Lost Generation has no self-discipline to remove them from the desperate. World War I removed all the illusions from the world and left the veterans aimless (Rovit 345).

### 3.1.2. Death of Love and the Question of Masculinity and Femininity

Furthermore, author Onderdonk in his work “‘Bitched’: Feminization, Identity, and the Hemingwayesque in *The Sun Also Rises*” explains how Hemingway is a writer concerned by the essence of the male identity. Nevertheless, he explores the male identity in the ways that are contrary to the stereotypical macho values. In his stories, especially in *The Sun Also Rises*, Hemingway not only explains the macho side of men but also the new, modernist feature of femininity, the “new man” and the “new woman” (62).

As author Onderdonk explains, Hemingway focuses on the alcohol, drinking, and bullfighting, which are the characteristics of a macho, of typical man's activities. Nevertheless, the protagonist, Jake, cannot be identified as a traditional macho: “Narrator Jake Barnes is impotent due to a war wound, and he faces intense humiliations at the hands of the sexually peripatetic “new woman,” Lady Brett Ashley. He even takes a beating over her at the

hands of the novel's much-deprecated Robert Cohn" (Onderdonk 62). Jake does not fit the standard macho picture because his manhood was taken away from him in the war. In addition, throughout the story Jake meets and socializes with women but never physically. At the beginning of the story Jake has a drink with a girl named Georgette. "[Georgette] looked up to be kissed. She touched me with one hand and I put her hand away. "Never mind. What's the matter? You sick? Everybody's sick. I'm sick too" (Hemingway 15-16). Jake feels sick and unmanly because of his wound. The wound presents a constant psychological barrier that prevents him from being serious with any girl, especially with the one he loves, Lady Brett Ashley.

Consequently, as author Rovit points out, Jake is a passive character, he does not do much, only observes and comments; "Jake is pre-eminently a man to whom things happen" (345). All of Jake's actions are connected to his war wound. Not being able to be intimate with women changed him and his identity shifted to a man who observes: "His impotence has transformed his friends' acts into theatre and himself into director: his visionary ability appears to be at once a product of and compensation for his inability to participate in his own bedroom scenes" (Strychacz 255-256). Nevertheless, he is a reporter, journalist, and a literary man that has a critical point of view towards most of the characters. His observations are very important to the people around him as they respect his comments and thoughts. For example, both Romero and Montoya appreciate Jake's opinion about the bullfights and both ask of Jake to watch the bullfights, therefore, "Jake has managed to transform observation itself into a kind of powerful witnessing" (Strychacz 256), thus making himself manlier.

Additionally, Jake as a journalist "desires control over his life through the act of editing it Benjamin-Franklin style in his text. This desire for control is not objectionable. It points to one of the major issues of the novel: the need to read and write and rewrite the text of one's life" (Budick 322). This need is closely connected to American culture and their belief in the Dream. Jake was a believer in the American Dream as he volunteered to serve in the war and help bring peace to the world. The consequences of the war left him desperate and lost (Budick 322). "Enjoying living was learning to get your money's worth and knowing when you had it. The world was a good place to buy in. It seemed like a fine philosophy" (Hemingway 148). The values he once believed in no longer mattered. He believed in the purity of hard work and how good things can happen. Like in Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, in *The Sun Also Rises* there is also a hero who ended tragically because of his beliefs.

Nonetheless, Jake is emotional and vulnerable at some points of the story. Most of them involve his love, Lady Brett Ashley. Author Onderdonk portrays Jake as the embodiment of the iceberg theory, which states how “the burden of discovering and analyzing male emotion is shifted to the reader, sparing the Hemingwayesque narrator the indignity of having to discourse too directly on his own suffering” (75). As author Spilka explains it in his work “The Death of Love in *The Sun Also Rises*”, Jake is also emotionally impotent because of his condition. Consequently, Jake shows his emotions only when Brett is with him or when he is alone (127). “When he is alone with Brett, he wants to live with her in the country, to go with her to Saint Sebastian, to go up to her room, to keep her in his own room, or to keep kissing her- though he can never really act upon such sentiments” (Spilka 129). She, being his true love, makes him go through humiliation and pain because she is a constant reminder that he can never truly be with her. Brett has also lost much in the war as her true love died of dysentery (Rovit 344). She loved Jake most of all the men she was with.

Spilka explains how death of love in the World War I was one of the most persistent themes of the Twentieth century (127). So, the way they perceive love shows how desperate and wretched their lives are: “‘It’s funny,’ I said. ‘It’s very funny. And it’s a lot of fun, too, to be in love.’ ‘Do you think so?’ her eyes looked flat again. ‘I don’t mean fun that way. In a way it’s an enjoyable feeling.’ ‘No,’ she said. ‘I think it’s hell on earth’” (Hemingway 27). Both characters lost too much to perceive love as something serious and real. Another quote that shows their despair is at the end of the novel, when Jake and Brett reunite after her romance with Romero was over:

“Oh Jake,” Brett said, “we could have had such a damned good time together.”

Ahead was a mounted policeman in khaki directing traffic. He raised his baton. The car slowed suddenly pressing Brett against me.

“Yes.” I said. “isn’t it pretty to think so?” (Hemingway 247)

Spilka comments how the word pretty that Jake uses means that it is foolish to think so because it could never have happened. The reason why is because the policeman that Hemingway introduces in between the two lines is a metaphor for war (137).

With his khaki clothes and his preventive baton, he stands for the war and the society which made it, for the force which stops the lovers’ car and which robs them of their normal sexual roles. As Barnes now sees, love itself is dead for

their generation. Even without his wound, he would still be unmanly and Brett unable to let her hair grow long. (Spilka 137)

Nevertheless, Spilka sates how Jake and Bret are not the only ones affected by war, “in some figurative manner these artists, writers, and derelicts have all been rendered impotent by the war. Thus, as Barnes presents them, they pass before us like a parade of sexual cripples. They are all incapable of love, and in their sober moments they seem to know it” (128). For example, Mike is unable to keep Brett from cheating; Georgette reduced love to prostitution. They all fail to some extent when it comes to love.

Also, all of the characters are in constant conflict with Cohn, especially Jake. It is because Cohn still upholds a romantic view of life:

He is the last chivalric hero, the last defender of an outworn faith, and his function is to illustrate its present folly- to show us, through the absurdity of his behaviour, that romantic love is dead, that one of the great guiding codes of the past no longer operates. “You’re getting damned romantic,” says Brett to Jake at one point in the novel. “No, bored,” he replies, because for this generation boredom has become more plausible than love. As a foil to his contemporaries, Cohn helps to reveal why this is so. (Spilka 129)

Like in *The Great Gatsby*, the old American values cannot survive the desperate and morally corrupted world after the World War I. Cohn is rejected by the rest of the society because of his beliefs.

### 3.1.3. True identity of Jake Barnes

However, Jake is the only one in the story that, in the end, stays sane and embraces his loss. That indeed makes him a true man: “This is possible in the sense that, both epistemologically and morally, Jake masters his own feminization, not only in the forthright report he provides of its devastations, but as we will see, in the resigned dignity with which- despite exquisite vulnerabilities- he endures it” (Onderdonk 66). Furthermore, Jake knows that there is no escaping the misery in their lives because they have lost too much: “Listen, Robert, going to another country doesn’t make any difference. I’ve tried all that. You can’t get away from yourself by moving from one place to another. There’s nothing to that” (Hemingway 11).

Also, what makes him a real man is Hemingway's concept of "the grace under pressure". He has dignity in all of his actions in the story and does not let his "sickness" affect him in front of others. Throughout the story Jake faces many humiliating situations. For instance, the time when Brett got involved with Cohn, or the time when he introduced Brett to Romero. These are the times when Jake's "sickness", his impotence is revealed. According to Rovit, Jake must ignore his desires and memories because they only cause him anguish. That is why he accepts the situation as it is and even helps Brett find new men, like Romero. "Only Jake has the self-discipline, the honesty, and the driving need to achieve a thin sleeve of freedom in recognizing and accepting the limitations of his condition" (347). Due to that, Jake is superior to the rest of the manly characters like Cohn and Romero. Even Brett returns to him after every affair, because he is the only one who actually has her affection.

All in all, Jake is a Hemingwayesque character that has many different identities;

He is typically white, American, and of the better-off, better-educated class; he desires certain objects and follows demanding codes of behaviour; he respects certain books and scorns others; he has distinct sensitivities and affective capacities; and he has certain (if sometimes shifting) political and philosophical affinities (Onderdonk 68).

His codes of behavior are what differentiate him from the rest of the group. Nevertheless, there is a shift in the story, Jake moves from the completely centerless character to a more stable one. That is the time when he is alone in St. Sebastian, and when he swims freely and enjoys life.

*The Sun Also Rises* is not simply a story about a lost generation, but about how a lost generation may find itself, how the sun may rise again, for both an individual and for his generation. The Jake who had begun his novel with the language of adolescent rage concludes it with a commentary which is Hemingway's as well as his own (Budick 334-335).

Even though Lady Brett Ashley again needed him to get her out of trouble, he seems calm and accepting of the situation, as he is more mature. Unlike Jay Gatsby who ended tragically in his desperate attempt to rewrite his past, there is hope for Jake because he learned to embrace his troubles and imperfections.



## Conclusion

World War I had an immense influence on the United States. The violence, loss, and terror shattered the old American values leaving American society aimless and confused. As the country lost its identity so did the people, producing the Lost Generation. With the economy returning to normal and Prohibition empowered, society produced a revolution, the Roaring Twentieths, the time of massive consumerism and drinking. In both literary works there is a hero who is unable to achieve its goal due to difficult social and historical circumstances.

In *The Great Gatsby*, Jay as a believer in the American Dream does not fit into the society that is morally corrupted. Jay managed to transform himself from a poor farmer to the wealthiest man in the West Egg. Unfortunately, what he did wrong was that he lived in the past, always trying to rewrite it. His inability to realize that he cannot change his past led him to his tragic death. All he ever wanted was to be with his ideal, his Daisy, but genuine people like him cannot survive in the brutal and corrupted society that existed in the United States.

In *The Sun Also Rises*, Jake also once believed in the American Dream, but his belief was shattered due to war. He is the representative of the Lost Generation, a generation influenced by horrifying events of war, death of love, death of old American values that aimlessly go through life. Jake is impotent because of war, however, he still proves to be a real man, a person superior to the rest of the characters. He gives hope to the lost people as he still lives by certain rules and has dignity in every action.

To conclude, both protagonists, Jake and Jay, have complex identities that cannot be subscribed to only one aspect. They are both in conflict with the society of the 1920s, they both want to be with their true love, and they are both scared by the World War I. Americanism, capitalism, and consumerisms were too much for both of them. In the end, it is clear how genuine and uncorrupted people like Jake and Jay cannot survive in the modern society that was created in the early twentieth century America.

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