

English Honors, Class Mr. Ruppel

10/1/18

### Out of Place, Out of Time

World War I caused a shift in our view of the world; the countless deaths and needless destruction exposed people to harsh realities and created the Lost Generation, a group of people who rejected the previous generation's ideas of appropriate behavior, morality, and gender roles. *The Sun Also Rises* by Ernest Hemingway and *The Remains of the Day* by Kazuo Ishiguro are two novels who portray the effects of the Lost Generation very differently--one through members of the Lost Generation and the other through a man who realizes he no longer fits into the new world of the Lost Generation.

*The Sun Also Rises* is a classic novel of the Lost Generation, depicting characters who drink, party, and act promiscuous as a way to fill the hole left in their lives when the traditional values and morals of the previous generation deserted them during World War I. "I can't stand it to think my life is going so fast and I'm not really living it." "Nobody ever lives their life all the way up except bullfighters," (Hemingway, 1926). This is the quintessential problem for the Lost Generation, they have no meaning in their lives and thus are always searching for it in the next big thing. Here, Jake is telling Cohn to just accept that reality, that he will never truly be happy and satisfied with his life. In contrast, *The Remains of the Day* is about Stevens, a butler who is realizing that his life held no meaning because he held onto those traditional values in a world that had abandoned them, his memories tinged with sorrow and regret. "And as far as I am concerned, I carried out my duties to the best of my abilities, indeed to a standard which many

may consider 'first-rate.' It is hardly my fault is his lordship's life and work have turned out today to look, at best, a sad waste-and it is quite illogical that I should feel any regret or shame on my own account," (Ishiguro, 1989). His purpose in life was to faithfully serve an honorable man, and in realizing that he has thrown his life and happiness away for Lord Darlington, who was not the perfect master that he had always thought him to be, he recognizes that his life was essentially a waste.

The central theme in both novels is a disillusionment from traditional values that gave life meaning, however the shape that takes and the reactions of the characters are very different. In *The Sun Also Rises*, Jake and his friends lead hollow lives, filling the time with inconsequential and escapist activities in order to forget their pain. This is highlighted by the contrast that the young bullfighter Romero provides, who, unlike most of his generation, leads a life of passion and purpose through his bullfighting. "Afterward, all that was faked turned bad and gave an unpleasant feeling. Romero's bull-fighting gave real emotion, because he kept the absolute purity of line in his movements and always quietly and calmly let the horns pass him close each time," (Hemingway, 1926). This raw emotion is what attracts Brett and many others, is what makes him different from everyone else. However, in *The Remains of the Day*, what sets Stevens apart and reaffirms the fact that he does not belong in the new world is his old fashioned views rather than his emotions. "It's a fact of life. Today's world is too foul a place for fine and noble instincts," (Ishiguro, 1989). He grew up in a time radically different from how it is now, and in living his life as if he was still back in that time he has not allowed himself the proper experiences which would give his life meaning now (admitting his love for Miss Kenton, not blindly following a

flawed master). This results in a hollow life lived in the quest for traditional values which are now long gone.

The abandonment of traditional values that characterizes these novels is best represented in Belmonte, the retired bullfighter. "The public, who wanted three times as much from Belmonte, who was sick with a fistula, as Belmonte had ever been able to give, felt defrauded and cheated, and Belmonte's jaw came further out in contempt, and his face turned yellower, and he moved with greater difficulty as his pain increased, and finally the crowd were actively against him, and he was utterly contemptuous and indifferent," (Hemingway, 1926). Belmonte is going through what the Lost Generation and Stevens is--he is out of his time, without purpose, his greatest accomplishments behind him. He was never and will never be able to live up to the spiraling legends about him and thus his supporters turn on him, expecting way too much from someone who already retired. His bitterness and indifference mirror that of Jake's friends and Stevens, who live their lives but don't actually live, because of similar reasons--the cultures/fans that supported them and gave them meaning have now abandoned them.

In the end, both of the main characters, Jake and Stevens, look back on their life with regret because of the choices they made. Jake who will never have a happy relationship with Brett and Stevens who has wasted his life and thrown away his chance with Miss Kenton. This loss hits especially hard with this quote from Miss Kenton: "But that doesn't mean to say, of course, there aren't occasions now and then- extremely desolate occasions--when you think to yourself: 'What a terrible mistake I've made with my life.' And you get to thinking about a different life, a better life you might have had... After all, there's no turning back the clock now. One can't be forever dwelling on what might have been," (Ishiguro, 1989).

### Works Cited

1. Hemingway, Ernest, et al. *The Sun Also Rises*. Scribner, 1926.
2. Ishiguro, Kazuo. *Remains of the Day*. Faber and Faber, 1989.
3. "Teaching the American 20s: The Lost Generation." Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin,  
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