

# Outing Jake Barnes: *The Sun Also Rises* and the Gay World

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"Read anything I write for the pleasure of reading it," Hemingway said, "Whatever else you find will be the measure of what you brought to the reading.' I will bring to my reading of *The Sun Also Rises* a point of view and an historical context which has been largely ignored in the existing criticism: the point of view of a self – identified gay male reader and context of the "gay world" of the 1920s. To my mind, *The Sun Also Rises* is a realistic novel, a novel in which Hemingway was interested in capturing "the way it was" to be a young person growing up with the century. Vitally concerned with the intricacies, dangers, and rewards of negotiating one's own sexual identity in the early decades of the century, *The Sun Also Rises* is a remarkable time capsule through which to view the sexual politics of the 1920s. The novel focuses on the experience of a man, but it also throws a reflected light on the plight of a woman caught in the current sexual system.

I will argue that in *The Sun Also Rises* what cannot be named is not the nature of Jake's wound but his sexual identity as a "queer" man. This act of preterition is perfectly in keeping with the century – long (non)-existence of homosexuality in the annals of literature. By figuring Jake's

1. George Plimpton, "An Interview with Ernest Hemingway" [From *The Paris Review* 18 (1958), in Linda Welshimer Wagner, ed., *Ernest Hemingway: Five Decades of Criticism* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1974), p. 31.

homosexuality as a mysterious hurt, wound, accident, imperfection, Hemingway is symbolically writing himself into a western tradition that has described same – sex genitality as *nefandam libidinem*, "that sin which should be neither named nor committed," "the detestable and abominable sin, amongst Christians not to be named," and "the love that dare not speaks its name."

Carlos Baker has noted that "so many of our habits of seeing and saying take their origin from recollected emotion gone stale."<sup>2</sup> It can only be convention and the force of habit that have sustained critics' belief in Jake and Brett's romantic love in the face of strong evidence that their relationship is primarily a close friendship. For different reasons, Jake and Brett want very much to be in love with each other, but the manner in which their relationship is presented – a mixture of playful badinage in public and melodrama in private – should make us sceptical of the sincerity and depth of their romantic feelings for each other. Roger Whitlow has observed that the scenes of torment between Jake and Brett "have the mock – seriousness of the soap opera."<sup>3</sup> When we consider that Hemingway is known for the understated, terse, and subtle way in which he depicts strong emotion, there is every reason to question the depth of feeling in Jake's and Brett's sentimental dialogues. Jake's and Brett's relationship is largely a romantic pipe dream; they are more in love with the idea of being in love than they are with each other. As I will soon show, it is Jake who has the most to gain from their relationship. He himself recognizes this about halfway through the novel: "I had been having Brett for a friend. I had not been thinking about her side of it. I had been getting something for nothing."<sup>4</sup>

Brett Ashley has very seldom been understood. She belongs to the first generation of women to drink and smoke, the first generation to vote, and the first generation for whom divorce was a reasonable solution to a bad marriage.<sup>5</sup> More significantly, she belongs to the first generation of women to expect sexual fulfillment on their own terms. What others have

2. Carlos Baker, *Hemingway: The Writer as Artist* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), p. 60.

3. Roger Whitlow, *Cassandra's Daughters: The Women in Hemingway* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1984), p. 58.

4. Ernest Hemingway, *The Sun Also Rises* (New York: Scribner's, 1954 [1926]), p. 148. All subsequent references in the text are to this edition.

5. Michael S. Reynolds, *The Sun Also Rises: A Novel of the Twenties* (Boston: Twayne, 1988), p. 3.

labelled as "nymphomania" or maneating tendencies should be seen simply as a woman's attempt to explore her own sexuality. In Wolfgang Rudat's view, and in my own, Brett's problem is that she can't get no satisfaction.<sup>6</sup> The irony of her situation, is that despite the many men that surround her, few of them take a sexual interest in her. Those who do, on the other hand – Robert Cohn and Pedro Romero – seem not to see her at all for who she really is or cannot accept her as she is. Rudat argues reasonably that the change that comes over Brett in Chapter 18, after she has slept with Pedro Romero, is due to the fact that for the first time she has been able to have an orgasm.<sup>7</sup> The euphoria this generates carries her off to Madrid with the young matador, but sexual fulfillment is not enough on which to build a long – term relationship. By the end of the novel, Brett has still not been able to find emotional *and* sexual fulfillment in one and the same man. With Romero she can have great sex, with Mike or Jake, companionship only.

Sibbie O'Sullivan has pointed out that "British Blondes, the Gibson Girl, and the flapper, had the ability to be 'pals' with men, to sustain friendships as opposed to courtships."<sup>8</sup> "The genius of Brett Ashley," she adds, "lies not in Hemingway's ability to create the Great American Bitch but in his ability to create woman Friend."<sup>9</sup> There can be no doubt that the basis of the relationship between Brett and her "chaps" – the count, Mike, Bill, Jake – is first and foremost one of friendship. Rudat ascribes these men's lack of sexual interest in Brett to their impotence. While I am not in a position to comment on the statistical probability of such an epidemic of impotence among a group of mostly young men, I would suggest that if impotence it be, it is due rather to their lack of physical attraction to the opposite sex than to some physiological cause.

Though hitherto unrecognized as such, Brett Ashley is one of the first incarnations in literature of the "faghag": a woman who often has trouble relating to straight men and who finds fulfillment in intimate friendships with gay men. When we first encounter Brett, she is in the company of

6. Wolfgang E. H. Rudat, *A Rotten Way to Be Wounded: The Tragicomedy of The Sun Also Rises* (New York: Peter Lang, 1990), p. 93.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 67.

8. Sibbie O'Sullivan, "Love and Friendship/Man and Woman in *The Sun Also Rises*," *Arizona Quarterly* 44 (1988), 79.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 81.

homosexuals and it is my claim that she continues to be so during most of the action depicted in the novel.<sup>10</sup>

It can be argued that the heterosexual credentials of all Brett's pals are seriously in doubt. Count Mippipopolous is an ageing roué, who keeps a younger male lover, Zizi (his name is French argot for penis), Mike Campbell's dominant drive is to drink, but Svoboda has pointed out that a line about him in one of the deleted initial chapters indicates that he "may have had hoinosexual tendencies."<sup>11</sup> The line in question states that Mike "had various habits that Brett felt sorry for, did not think a man should have, and cured by constant watchfulness and the exercise of her then very strong will."<sup>12</sup> Despite being in their mid – thirties or older, neither Mike, Bill, Jake, or the count have ever been married nor do we hear of or experience their romantic involvement with women, apart from their ostensible infatuation with Brett.

In contrast, the novel begins with a detailed account of Robert Cohn's love life. Remarkably, the over – suspicious and intensely jealous Cohn never for a moment suspects Jake of being a potential rival for Brett's affections. Nor is he at all worried about Mike or Bill. This must be because he senses that these men have only a platonic interest in his lady love. On the background of the queerness of his surroundings, we discern yet another reason why Robert Cohn doesn't fit in. He is a constant reminder to the other men of what they are not; his heterosexuality rather more than his Jewishness make him an object of contempt in the eyes of Mike, Bill, and partly Jake. R.W. Stallman couldn't have known how right he was when he observed that "Cohn is the most normal character in the book."<sup>13</sup>

10. The egregious link between misogyny and homophobia is vividly illustrated by the reception of this novel and particularly by the treatment Brett Ashley has received at the hands of male critics. This is nowhere more succinctly shown than by Michael Reynold's casual observation that Brett is "the sort of woman who would drink with homosexuals and recognize a prostitute" (*Sun Also Rises*, p. 72). In comparison, Roger Whitlow was being almost progressive when he wrote in 1984 that "Brett was an individual whose female sexual appeal and general attractiveness were exceptional, despite her bobbed hair and her occasional association with homosexuals" (*op. cit.*, p. 50).

11. Frederic Joseph Svoboda, *Heiningway & The Sun Also Rises: The Crafting of a Style* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1983), p. 101.

12. Quoted *ibid.*

13. R. W. Stallman, *The Houses that James Built and Other Literary Studies* (East Lansing, Michigan: Michigan State University Press, 1961), p. 180.

Brett's pals need her for a heterosexual alibi. The motif has been foreshadowed by Jake picking up the *poule* Georgette Hobin before going to the *bal musette* and then ignoring her when he gets there. Jake tries to explain his hiring her services by saying that he had "a vague sentimental idea that it would be nice to eat with someone" (16), though he has many friends who might have served that purpose. He introduces Georgette as his fiancé to the Braddockses, the gay in – joke being that Jake gives his fiance the name of a real – life lesbian singer, Georgette Leblanc, whom Hemingway knew in Paris.<sup>14</sup> Though they take the traditional view that Jake is a castrated heterosexual, Arnold and Cathy Davidson acutely observe that what Jake is paying for when he takes Georgette out is "the privilege of keeping up appearances." They are mistaken, though, when they say that "keeping up appearances is also what the young men are doing when they arrive with Brett or dance with Georgette."<sup>15</sup> The young gay men dance with Georgette not so much to cover their tracks, but quite simply because if they want to dance at all they must dance with a woman. During the Paris of the mid – '20s it was prohibited for two men to dance with each other and the police closed the Bal de la Montagne Ste. Genevieve several times when this was found to be taking place.<sup>16</sup>

The scene from the *bal musette* at 46, Rue de la Montagne Sainte Genevieve – a famous gay nightspot in the Paris of the '20s and early '30s – shows the extent to which the author of *The Sun Also Rises* was familiar with the gay world.<sup>17</sup> We need to take a much more nuanced view of Hemingway's attitude towards homosexuals, including the realization that his homophobic outbursts in *propria persona* may differ from the attitudes of his implied authors, narrators, and characters. To understand his attitudes, it is necessary to understand the world in which he lived, which was, among other things, a gay world. It is far too simple to say, as Carlos Baker did back in 1963, that Hemingway "scorns

14. Michael S. Reynolds, *Hemingway: The Paris Years* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), p. 310.

15. Arnold E. and Cathy N. Davidson, "Decoding the Hemingway Hero in *The Sun Also Rises*," in Linda Wagner – Martin, ed., *New Essays on The Sun Also Rises* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 91.

16. Brassai, *Tlze Secret Paris of the 30's*, trans. Richard Miller (New York: Pantheon, 1976), n. pag.

17. On the Bal de la Montagne Ste. Geneviève, see Gilles Barbedette and Michel Carassou, *Paris Gay 1925* (Paris: Presses de la Renaissance, 1981), pp. 20 – 25; John Leland, *A Guide to Hemingway's Paris* (Chapel Hill: Algonquin Books, 1989), p. 9; and photographs in Brassai, *op. cit.*

perversion of any kind," that his "preoccupation is rather with the healthy norm of ordinary sexual behavior" than with exceptions to the norm, and that "his championship of the normal and the natural . . . runs like a backbone down through the substance of the tales he elects to tell."<sup>18</sup> Nancy Comley and Robert Scholes conclude their monograph *Hemingway's Genders* from 1994 with the words: "The Hemingway you were taught about in high school is dead. *Viva el nuevo Hemingway*."<sup>19</sup> Their contention is that the Hemingway who wrote "A Lack of Passion," *Death in the Afternoon*, "The Mother of a Queen," and a score of other depictions of sexual deviance "is a more interesting writer than a Hemingway seen as the advocate and the embodiment of a mindless machismo and homophobia."<sup>20</sup>

One could argue that while Hemingway takes a minoritizing view of homosexuality in his public pronouncements, he takes a universalizing view in his fiction. That is to say, that while to "Papa" Hemingway, homosexuals are an easily identifiable, easily reducible, undifferentiated body of deviants, whose stories end very much one like the other, Hemingway's own stories about them show the exact opposite to be the case. As Comley and Scholes have noted: "The evidence in the literature counters the kind of statement often made by Hemingway himself or by one of his characters that it is easy to tell homosexual males by some quality that they all have in common."<sup>21</sup> In his stories, Hemingway does not base himself on any one model or etiology of homosexuality. We find in his works both the inversion trope and the trope of gender separatism; i.e. homosexuality figured as a female soul in a male body or, conversely, as a case of an excess of maleness.<sup>22</sup>

Comley and Scholes are among the few critics to do more than simply 'note "an extraordinary interest in homoeroticism on Hemingway's part."<sup>23</sup> They are joined by Ira Elliott and Gregory Woods, who have

18. Baker, *op. cit.*, pp. 68, 139, 141.

19. Nancy Comley and Robert Scholes, *Hemingway's Genders: Rereading the Hemingway Text* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1994), p. 146.

20. Nancy Comley and Robert Scholes, "Hemingway's Gay Blades," *Differences* 5 (1993), 138.

21. *Ibid.*, pp. 107 – 8.

22. See Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990), pp. 87 – 88.

23. Comley and Scholes, *Hemingway's Genders*, *op. cit.*, p. 107.

recently written articles that examine the representation of sexuality in *The Sun Also Rises*.<sup>24</sup> Their work is important and enlightening, but to a certain extent its authors run into some of the same problems as did previous, more traditional, and largely homophobic critics. The most anachronistic move made by all commentators on Hemingway's writing about homosexuals is to subsume all his many different portrayals under the term "homosexual" and leave it at that. These critics lack insight into the sexual system within which the author and his original readers lived their lives.

The sexual world of the twenties was a different one from that of today. As historian George Chauncey has shown in his magisterial study of the making of the gay male world from 1890 till 1940, "The most striking difference between the dominant sexual culture of the early twentieth century and that of our own era is the degree to which the earlier culture permitted men to engage in sexual relations with other men, often on a regular basis, without requiring them to regard themselves – or to be regarded by others – as gay."<sup>25</sup> Today we are accustomed to thinking of sexuality in the terms of a heterosexual/homosexual dichotomy. These categories are rigid and despite the existence of a group of people who define themselves as bisexual, the prevalent feeling is that the choice of one sexuality or the other is a choice for life. In the pre – World War II era, having sex with a man did not necessarily make you gay; sexual acts between men did not necessarily carry with them the identity – making power nor the soulsearching they do today. This made for a different gallery of homosexual types than we presently recognize.

First and foremost, one had the *fairies*. Being a fairy was a question not only of sexual inversion but of gender inversion; effeminacy was as central to the definition of a fairy as sexual object choice. This fact was emphasized by the synonyms for fairy, such as she – man, nance, sissy, and pansy.<sup>26</sup> The fairies were the most visible, loud, flamboyant, easily

24. Ira Elliott, "Performance Art: Jake Barnes and 'Masculine' Signification in *The Sun Also Rises*," *American Literature* 67 (1995), 77 – 94; Gregory Woods, "The Injured Sex: Hemingway's Voice of Masculine Anxiety," in Judith Still and Michael Worton, eds., *Textuality and Sexuality: Reading Theories and Practices* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1993), pp. 160 – 72.

25. George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890 – 1940* (New York: Basic Books, 1994), p. 65.

26. *Ibid.*, pp. 13, 15.

recognizable tip of the gay iceberg, both in the real world and in the world of fiction. In Hemingway, we find them most famously in the *bal musette* scene in *The Sun Also Rises*. There the fairies are easy to recognize both for Jake Barnes and for the reader. James Hinkle is symptomatic when he writes: "We recognize them by how they talk ..." <sup>27</sup> Isa Elliott has noted that it is "external signs – that is, behavioral or performative acts" that "lead Jake to 'read' the men as homosexual." <sup>28</sup> Wavy hair, pale skin, gesturing hands, effeminate speech – a concatenation of these characteristics can only connote one thing by the mid – '20s: "inversion." <sup>29</sup>

Chauncey notes that "The very brilliance of the fairy left most men safely in the shadows ..." <sup>30</sup> Because they were the most richly plumed birds in the gay aviary, the fairies threw all its other inhabitants – queers, trade, wolves, punks – into the shadows. It was an anonymous existence that to them was most congenial. The fairies' flagrancy served to draw attention away from the other homosexual types; fairies became synonymous with what a homosexual was and other homosexuals disappeared from view. The fairies served this function in the gay world of the twenties, they serve this function in Hemingway's novel of the twenties, and they have continued to serve this function in the criticism of the novel ever since. Given their prominent and exuberant presence in the early pages of the novel, it has never been possible for critics to see past them, to imagine that there might be other homosexuals and ways of being homosexual in the novel.

One of those ways was to be *queer*. Not to be confused with present – day appropriation of the word, queers were men who defined themselves primarily on the basis of their homosexual interest rather than their womanlike gender role. In their outward demeanor and appearance there was nothing to separate them from so – called "normal" men; they could pass for straight, and were thus able to live the double life of the closet homosexual. As Chauncey has noted, "Pervasive anti – homosexual

27. James Hinkle, "What's Funny in *The Sun Also Rises*," in Harold Bloom, ed., *Ernest Hemingway's The Sun Also Rises* (New York and Philadelphia: Chelsea House, 1987), p. 144.

28. Elliott, *op. cit.*, p. 79.

29. In an early draft for the novel, Hemingway labelled the group of young men outright as "Fairies." The passage is published in Reynolds, *Hemingway, op. cit.*, pp. 33 – 34.

30. Chauncey, *op. cit.*, p. 177.



social attitudes kept many men who were interested in other men from fully acknowledging that interest to themselves, and many of them sought sexual encounters in spaces, such as public washrooms, that seemed to minimize the implications of the experiences by making them easy to isolate from the rest of their lives and identities." He adds that "Managing a double life was relatively easy for many men because they did not consider their homosexual identity to be their only important identity."<sup>31</sup>

From the standpoint of literary representation, the queer is almost as invisible in fiction as he was in life. Short of depicting him in *flagrante delicto* or using the term "queer" itself, how is one to suggest his identity? Added to his anonymity is the fact that while the figure of the fairy has lived on in the popular imagination, the queer has never taken hold there. He has been more or less completely erased from the collective cultural memory.

Queer invisibility goes a long way towards explaining why no one has ever questioned Jake's heterosexuality. Even the one other gay – identified critic to analyze the novel states outright that Jake Barnes is a "white American heterosexual male."<sup>32</sup> With straight critics, Jake's homophobia has no doubt served to strengthen the impression of his heterosexuality. Yet this homophobia need not be seen as a blanket condemnation of all homosexuals, but rather as being directed towards specific attitudes and behaviors. Baker noted many years ago that "in Hemingway's esthetic . . . what is true, in the sense of being natural and untinkered – with, is also beautiful. Ugliness in Hemingway is almost invariably associated with the abnormal and the unnatural: the unwomanly woman, for example, or the unmanly man."<sup>33</sup> Thus Jake's homophobia, like that of his creator, is directed specifically towards the fairies, who flaunt gender roles and voluntarily feminize themselves. As Ira Elliott has recently noted: "Jake objects not so much to homosexual behavior (which is unseen) but to 'femininity' expressed through the 'wrong' body."<sup>34</sup> Jake's anger towards the fairies in the *bal musette* is

31. *Ibid.*, pp. 200, 273.

32. Woods, *op. cit.*, p. 161.

33. Baker, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

34. Elliott, *op. cit.*, p. 79.

caused not by the mere fact of their being homosexuals, but by their behavior. "I wanted to swing on one, anyone," he writes, "anything to shatter that superior, simpering composure" (20). He feels sick when one of the fairies, a novelist named Robert Prentiss, tries to pick him up. As a queer man, his reaction is characteristic. According to Chauncey: "[M]any queers were repelled by the style of the fairy and his loss of manly status, and almost all were careful to distinguish themselves from such men. . . . They were so careful to draw such distinctions in part because the dominant culture failed to do so."<sup>35</sup> This is the same dynamic by which many gay men today are anxious not to be identified with what they see as the more extreme range of the homosexual spectrum, such as the drag queens and leathermen. Michael S. Reynolds notes that Jake and the policeman exchange a look on the fairies arrival to indicate that they are not like that.<sup>36</sup> Apart from the many things this look might presage in the setting of a gay dance, the fact of the policeman and Jake feeling themselves different from the fairies does not make them straight. Chauncey notes the importance of eye contact, particularly for men with no outward, physical signs of gayness, and observes that a fear of being misunderstood would make straight men increasingly wary of fastening their eyes on each other.<sup>37</sup>

The homosexual panic Jake experiences at the bal *musette* has been echoed by many male critics of the novel. The scene with the fairies so clearly points up the parallels between the fairies' relation to women and Jake's relation to them, that commentators have felt cause for anxiety. In 1950, Theodore Bardacke clearly felt the need to stress the point that "Jake, who is genuinely in love with Brett, is kept from her by an impotence that is the result of a war accident rather than any deficiency in his personality."<sup>38</sup> In making this statement of what to most readers would seem patently obvious, Bardacke doth protest too much, as if he discerned the possibility that Jake's impotence had other than a physical cause. In this anxiety he is not alone. Five years after Bardacke, Tom Burnam writes: "Jake Barnes seems to fulfill every masculine function *except* the only genuinely 'primitive' one. Although clearly it is through

35. Chauncey, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

36. Reynolds, *Sun Also Rises*, *op. cit.*, p. 72.

37. Chauncey, *op. cit.*, p. 188.

38. Theodore Bardacke, "Critical Extracts: Theodore Bardacke," in Bloom, ed., *op. cit.*, p. 13

no fault of his own. . ."<sup>39</sup> Mark Spilka is so eager to avoid an ascription of homosexuality to the protagonist of *The Sun Also Rises* that he prefers to think of Jake as a lesbian, summing up a particularly panicky passage with the observation that Jake "wants Brett in a womanly way."<sup>40</sup>

Jake's relationships with the other men in the story are as revealing of his sexual identity as his farcical romance with Brett. Robert Cohn takes pride of place in having several chapters devoted to his life and loves at the very beginning of the novel and through the intensity of feeling Jake reveals towards him throughout the book. There can be no doubt that the hate Jake feels is mixed with love, a love that goes beyond what he feels for Mike Campbell or even his good friend Bill Gorton. We note that while acting as the confidant both of Cohn and of Cohn's longtime girlfriend Frances Clyne, Jake seems to be doing what he can to sabotage the relationship by suggesting that he and Robert go to Strasbourg to see a swell girl Jake knows there. Significantly, Jake's answer to Cohn's complaint that nothing ever happens to him is to suggest that he "cruise around" (12). On one of the first days of the fiesta, Jake goes to sleep in Cohn's room, giving the reader the explanation that his own room was locked and he could not find the key.

Any love Jake feels for Robert Cohn is, of course, hopeless, as is his attraction to the young bullfighter Pedro Romero. Arnold and Cathy Davidson have noted that Romero exists not as a person for the aficionados but as an icon of essential masculinity.<sup>41</sup> He functions equally as a legitimate male object of the male gaze. Significantly, he is the only man Jake feels he can openly admire, telling both us and his friends that the young bullfighter was "the best – looking boy I have ever seen" (163), "a damn good – looking boy" (167) and "nice to look at" (184). In Jake's words: "Bill and I were very excited about Pedro Romero" (164). His charms are not lost on Mike either and we can wonder if some of his bluster about Brett wanting to get into Romero's pants does not reflect Mike's own desires. Jake has to content himself with teaching Brett to admire her lover's technique. His lovingly detailed renderings of Romero becoming one with the bull are among the most homoerotic moments in

39. Tom Burnam, "Critical Extracts: Tom Burnam," in Bloom, ed., op. cit., p. 23.

40. Mark Spilka, *Hemingway's Quarrel with Androgyny* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), p. 204.

41. Davidson and Davidson, op. cit., p. 97.

the novel. Significantly, the straight Robert Cohn is the only one not to succumb to the charms of the bullfight or the bullfighter. As he says early on, when Jalte suggests that only bullfighters live life all the way up: "I'm not interested in bull – fighters. That's an abnormal life" (10).

It has frequently been pointed out that Jake acts as a matchmaker between Brett and Pedro Romero. Whether she realizes it or not, Brett is equally instrumental in bringing Jalte and Count Mippipopolous together. Leon F. Seltzer has observed out that "the novel contains not the slightest suggestion that the count aspires to make Brett his mistress"<sup>42</sup> and I would argue that if the count aspires to make anyone his mistress, it is Jalte, not Brett. On his second visit to Jake's apartment, the count brings him "a great bunch of roses" (53) and presents them with his customary formality. Later, there is a basket of champagne. One of the most delicious in – jokes in the novel occurs when it turns out that the champagne grower the count is friendly with is not "la Veuve Clicquot," – "the merry widow" – as Brett suggests, but Baron Mumm.<sup>43</sup> The count is always eager to have Jake join Brett and himself on their outings and on one such evening they end up at Zelli's, a notoriously decadent nightclub in Montmartre.<sup>44</sup> The final image of the count surrounded by three of the club's hostesses is equivocal, as their function was "to seduce patrons into buying more and more champagne."<sup>45</sup> The motif of the homosexual who "goes with very many women to hide what he is" is one we also find in *Across the River and into the Trees* and the story "The Mother of a Queen."

There is also suggestion that Brett may not be the only person the count may have offered a large sum of money to go away with him. The following is part of Jake's train of thought as he goes to pray in the cathedral on first arriving in Pamplona:

I wondered if there was anything else I might pray for, and I thought I would like to have some money, so I prayed that I would make a lot of money, and then I started to think how I would make it, and thinking of making money reminded me of the count, and I started wondering about where he was, and regretting I hadn't seen him since that night in Montmartre, and about something funny Brett told me about him ... (97)

42. Leon F. Seltzer, "Critical Extracts: Leon F. Seltzer," in Bloom, ed., *op. cit.*, p. 43.

43. Hinkle, *op. cit.*, p. 147, points out the joke, but he does not fathom its gay resonances

44. Leland, *op. cit.*, pp. 81 – 82.

45. *Ibid.*, p. 81.

At this point Jake feels ashamed, regrets that he is "such a rotten Catholic," and hurries out of the church. We note that it is not just money that makes Jake think of the count, but how he might make it. There is a possible parallel here with Hemingway's own life. At the close of the First World War, Hemingway's friend Jim Gamble had offered to support him for a year while they lived and travelled in Italy. Agnes von Kurowsky sensed that Gamble felt a sexual attraction towards Hemingway and warned her lover that "he'd never be anything but a bum if he started travelling around with somebody else paying all his expenses."<sup>46</sup> Hemingway turned Gamble down.

Jake's close friend Bill Gorton is the most unequivocally queer man in the novel. In an intricate, chapter – long argument, Rudat claims that Bill has become impotent because women have rejected him due to his ugliness. He practices *agape* ("brotherly love") in Rudat's opinion, because he is disillusioned with romantic love.<sup>47</sup> This curious argument has certain affinities with the equally ridiculous theory that ugly women become lesbians because no man will have them. Regardless of whether he is ugly or not, and there is no suggestion that Jake thinks him so, it is interesting to note how Bill stresses that his is a face "any woman could be safe with" (102). This idea of safety is, of course, an echo of what Brett says about the fairies at the *bal musette*: "And when one's with the crowd I'm with, one can drink in such safety, too" (22).

One of the sections of the novel that most distinctly thematizes same – sex desire is, of course, Jake and Bill's fishing expedition to Burguete. Throughout the visit, Bill tries to draw Jake out and possibly to seduce him. On the morning of the first day, Bill, who shares a room with Jake, tries to get Jake to force him out of bed. When Jake ignores his antics, he asks: "Aren't you interested?" (113). Later, as they eat lunch on the riverbank, Bill questions Jake about his love life and his relationship with Brett, and makes the following declaration of love: "Listen. You're a hell of a good guy, and I'm fonder of you than anybody on earth. I couldn't tell you that in New York. It'd mean I was a faggot" (116). He recognizes that this rural Spanish setting makes it possible for him to say things to Jake that he would not dare say in New York. His advice to Jake is to

46. Jeffrey Meyers, *Hemingway: A Biography* (London: Macmillan, 1986), pp. 39 – 40

47. Rudat, *op. cit.*, Ch. VI.

"utilize," that is to enjoy the good things the world has to offer. As he is saying this, he is alternately sucking on and waving about a chicken drumstick. "Drumstick" is, of course, a slang expression for the *membrum virile*.<sup>48</sup> In a novel where any open profession of homosexual identity or enjoyment of that identity is impossible, this is the closest we come to an emancipatory move.

The following conversation ensues as Bill and Jake are having breakfast on the first morning of their outing:

- [Bill:] "You're an expatriate. You've lost touch with the soil. You get precious. Fake European standards have ruined you. You drink yourself to death. You become obsessed by sex. You spend all your time talking, not working. You are an expatriate, see? You hang around cafés."
- [Jake:] "It sounds like a swell life," I said. "When do I work?"
- "You don't work. One group claims women support you. Another group claims you're impotent."
- "No," I said. "I just had an accident."
- "Never mention that," Bill said. "That's the sort of thing that can't be spoken of. That's what you ought to work up into a mystery. Like Henry's bicycle." (115)

The allusion to "Henry's bicycle" refers, of course, to Henry James, who had been named fully in the original manuscript.<sup>49</sup> When Henry James was eighteen years of age, he helped to fight a fire at Newport, Rhode Island, where he was then living. While pumping water to put out the flames, he suffered a minor injury to his back. More than half a century later, he made this incident public knowledge by alluding to it in his autobiography *Notes of a Son and Brother*. By this time, the back injury had metamorphosized into what he described in guarded terms as "a horrid even if an obscure hurt."<sup>50</sup> By making a mystery in his 1914 'autobiography' of a banal injury in his youth, he hoped to deter future inquiry into the reasons for his lifelong bachelorhood.<sup>51</sup>

48. Eric Partridge, *A Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English* (New York: Macmillan, 1961 [1937]), 5<sup>th</sup> ed., p. 244.

49. Ernest Hemingway, *Selected Letters 1917 – 1961*, Carlos Baker, ed. (New York: Scribner's, 1981), pp. 208 – 9, 213.

50. Henry James, *Henry James: Autobiography*, Frederick W. Dupee, ed. (London: W. H. Allen, 1956), p. 415.

51. On James's "obscure hurt," see Leon Edel, *Henry James: A Life* (New York: Harper and Row, 1985), pp. 56-61; Fred Kaplan, *Henry James: The Imagination of Genius A Biography* (New York: William Morrow, 1992), pp. 55-56; and Richard Hall, "An Obscure Hurt. The Sexuality of Henry James: Part I and II," *New Republic* (April 28, 1979), 25-31; (May 5, 1979), 25-29.

It did not take long before critics were using this mysterious physical injury to explain not only James's lack of active participation in the Civil War, but equally his disinclination to marry and his celibacy. Their theory was that he had suffered an injury not to his back but to his genitals, an injury which rendered him impotent. The quoted scene from Hemingway's novel shows the extent to which Henry James's "obscure hurt" had become the subject of popular myth by the 1920s. That aside, there are interesting parallels between the real – life author who narrated *Notes of a Son and Brother* and the author – character who narrates *The Sun Also Rises*. We have two men and two mysterious injuries. Both men claim to have suffered a physical injury so serious that it has put them "hors de combat" both in relation to the war effort and other aspects of their daily lives. The specific location of either injury is unclear. In James's case it is implied that his "obscure hurt" made an active life as a soldier, husband, or father impossible. Jake Barnes's "accident" – what he elsewhere refers to variously as a hurt, a wound, an injury, an imperfection – has apparently rendered him incapable of having sexual intercourse with a woman. At no time is the actual nature of Jake's wound explicitly stated. Based purely on the evidence given in the text itself, it is impossible to diagnose Jake's condition with any degree of certainty or exactness. It would seem clear that at some point Jake was injured in the groin and that he uses this injury to explain his physical nonresponsiveness to women. Critics have been willing to accept Hemingway's post factum explanation, namely that Jake is "capable of all normal feelings as a man but incapable of consummating them" because his penis is missing.<sup>52</sup> Yet Hemingway's clarity of intention may only have come to him in retrospect. As Frederic Joseph Svoboda has pointed out, nowhere in the manuscripts is the wound more clearly identified than in the published work,<sup>53</sup> which would seem to indicate that Hemingway intended from the very first to leave out what – if anything – was left out of Jake Barnes. I would suggest that, as with Henry James, Jake's hurt is as much an emotional as a physical one.

The question of whether or not Jake undergoes a change, and whether it is for better or for worse, has been central to many discussions of the

52. Plimpton, *op. cit.*, p. 31

53. Svoboda, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

novel. If Jake undergoes a change, I would argue that it consists in his finally taking Bill's advice "to utilize," to enjoy the sensuous pleasures life has to offer. We see this clearly in the final scene with Brett in a Madrid restaurant. There is an air of celebration and buoyancy about Jake in this scene that betokens a new harmony. While Brett has hardly any appetite and is totally absorbed in her own loss of Pedro Romero, Jake tucks away an enormous meal of suckling pig and several bottles of wine. The following exchange takes place when Brett finally breaks out of her self – absorption:

"How do you feel, Jalte?" Brett asked. "My God! what a meal you've eaten."

"I feel fine. Do you want a dessert?"

"Lord, no."

Brett was smoking.

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

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

"What do you like to do?"

"Oh," I said, "I like to do a lot of things. Don't you want dessert?"

"You asked me that once," Brett said.

"Yes," I said. "So I did. . . ." (246)

Here we see Jake drawn between a devil – may – care desire to tell Brett about himself and ingrained habits of reticence. He teases her by hinting there are things he likes to do that she does not know about, but refuses to be specific. Jake Barnes is still not ready to come out, but by the time he utters the famous last line of the novel, he chooses to sound like a fairy because he finally recognizes that he too is part of the gay world.