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Bill Gorton Living Undaunted in Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises*

In post-war France, the "lost generation" found itself living a life of drinking, partying, and casual sexual affairs. In *The Sun Also Rises*, the character Jake Barnes finds himself among a group of people who have taken up this lifestyle in response to life's disappointments. Bill Gorton, on the other hand, is fairly different from the rest of Jake's group of friends. Bill is a wonderfully jovial character who influences Jake in a very positive manner. Throughout the novel we see Bill's many good qualities which allow for a strong, positive relationship with Jake and ultimately lead to changes in Jake's behavior.

Despite the self-image he likes to portray, one that matches the rest of his groups', Bill's attitude towards life is far more mature than that of most characters. Bill is not completely different; he does drink. However, while most of the other characters like to drink excessively, Bill isn't always as drunk as he would like others to believe. For example, when Jake asks Bill about his trip to Vienna, Bill answers that he was drunk for four days and doesn't remember a thing. Yet, as the conversation unfolds, Bill starts providing details about his experience adding that he remembers each perfectly (77). Clearly he must not have been as intoxicated as he claims, or he wouldn't remember as much about the occurrences in Vienna as he does. He also is like other characters in the novel in that he likes "fiesta-ing." He accompanies Jake in his trip to Pamplona to participate in the many days of fiesta, and when he parts with Jake, Jake knows that Bill's trip to Paris will involve more "fiesta-ing" (236). Like Brett, Mike, and Jake, we see that Bill also likes to take part in the party life adopted by many of the "lost generation." In spite of these similarities, Bill's character is more positive in comparison to many of the characters in the novel.

Throughout the novel Bill exhibits genuine kindness, generosity, and good humor. In a conversation with Jake, Bill mentions his encounter with a fighter in Vienna: The man had won a

fight but the crowd did not respond well to his victory and began throwing things at him; Bill didn't. When the crowd began throwing chairs, Bill rescued him, loaned him clothes, and loaned him money to get home to Cologne (77). The fact that Bill did not begin attacking the fighter shows that he has an idea of what is and isn't morally correct; he doesn't let himself get carried with what everyone else is doing. He has principles and sticks to them, very unlike Mike Campbell, another of Jake's friends, who doesn't understand or see anything wrong with giving away medals that belong to and were earned by someone other than himself (140). Mike stands back and lets his tailor "friend" take the fall for something that he (Mike) has done, whereas Bill steps in and rescues the fighter from being attacked and accused of something he had nothing to do with. Bill's willingness to give a stranger money to get back home also shows his generosity and genuine philanthropy. Clearly Bill's presence of morality and exceptional kindness separates him from the rest of the group.

Even Bill's sense of humor sets him apart; he likes making jokes for the purpose of uplifting people's spirits, in contrast to Mike's sense of humor, jokes focused on bringing others down. For instance, when heading to Biarritz with Jake, Bill encounters a group of people on a pilgrimage to Rome who had reserved the dining car until the afternoon, preventing Jake and Bill from having a good meal. In response to this, Bill says, "It's enough to make a man join the Klan" (93). Bill doesn't literally mean he wants to join the Klan; Bill simply has a way of turning less than positive situations into a joke. His sense of humor has a way of building people up and relieving some of the tension. His jokes are never a direct attack on anyone. Mike, on the other hand, targets someone specifically as the center of his jokes. For instance, when in Pamplona, Mike pokes fun at Cohn, saying he'd love being a steer because they never say anything and they always hang about (146). Mike knows he has made Cohn mad, yet he continues to make fun of Cohn and the way he follows Brett around like a steer. Mike's sense of humor is darker than Bill's. He doesn't care that what he says is offensive so long as he can get a good laugh out of it. In fact, instead of relieving tension, he tends to build it. Despite the differences between Bill and other characters in the novel, Bill has no problem being accepted as a part of the group, in particular by Jake.

Bill's positive and good-spirited personality allows for a strong relationship between him and Jake. It is evident throughout the novel that Jake very much enjoys Bill's company. Bill always puts Jake in a good mood and never seems to have any conflicts with Jake. In fact, Bill often seems to make Jake forget about his troubles. On the way to Biarritz for example, not once does the situation with Brett or Cohn cross Jake's mind (90-94). Also, during their fishing trip, Jake's mind is completely off his troubles (117-130). Bill's company seems to contribute to an atmosphere in which Jake can relax and truly enjoy the experience. They also seem to have similar values. For instance, they both value experience. On their way up to Burguette, both Bill and Jake enjoy passing through the mountains and seeing the trees, streams and fields, whereas Cohn shows no appreciation for any of it and falls asleep during the drive (99). They both enjoy fishing, they both enjoy bullfighting, and they both enjoy doing things for the sake of doing them, not necessarily for what benefits they may bring. Such is the relationship between Bill and Jake that, slowly, Bill starts to rub off on Jake.

Bill's influence on Jake is evident in the changes Jake makes in his behavior; Jake seems to emulate what he has seen in Bill. Bill has always shown an impulse to defend and help those in need. Towards the end of the novel, Jake, too, begins defending his friends and helping them out when need be. For example, when in San Sebastian, Brett leaves with Jake to talk and begins complaining about Cohn and Mike. In response to Brett's talk of Mike's bad behavior, Jake tries to make Brett understand that it is because the presence of Cohn has been hard on him. He then adds that, given the chance, everyone would behave badly (185). Mike is not exactly Jake's favorite person; he's engaged to the woman he loves, yet Jake puts all that aside and attempts to justify (if not understand) Mike's behavior. When Brett sends Jake a telegram asking him to come to her aide, Jake travels down to Madrid to help her, even though he doesn't want to, knowing it isn't what's best for him (243). Jake knows going to Madrid will only expose him to what has been making him hurt inside for a long time, yet he decides to set his feelings aside and go to Brett's aide. Jake learns not to let his personal opinions and feelings impede him from helping others, much like Bill does when he pulls Cohn aside when being attacked by Mike's harsh words

(147). Bill's influence has allowed for growth in Jake; however, having Bill as a model can only take Jake so far.

Bill's character clearly is indispensable to Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises*. Bill's good humor and generosity sets him aside from the rest of Jake's gang. He demonstrates a maturity that many characters in Hemingway's novel lack. Bill offers Jake an alternative to the lifestyle he has been living, and, though Jake does not emulate Bill completely, he is able to see in Bill qualities that will bring him closer to feeling whole. Though turning everything into a joke isn't the answer Jake's needs, it certainly helps to realize that living life with a mentality polluted by everything that is wrong and unfair. Bill offers Jake just that. Bill leads a life in which he does not let the bad things break his good spirit; Bill lives life undaunted.

Works Cited

Hemingway, Ernest. *The Sun Also Rises*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1926.