Hemmingway-The Sun Also Rises Essay, Research Paper

In the novel The Sun Also Rises, Ernest Hemingway describes

a couple who share a very strange and distant kind of love

for each other. This story takes place immediately after

World War I, a time of great hardship. This hardship results

in a digression of values both morally and socially. The

love that Brett and Jake share is symbolic of the general

decline in values in that they tolerate behaviors in one

another that would have been previously considered

unacceptable.

It is clear that Lady Brett Ashley is anything but a

lady. She is kind and sweet but extremely vulnerable to the

charm that various men in her life seem to smother her with.

Brett is not happy with her life or her surroundings and

seeks escape and refuge in the arms of these men. But her

actions seem always to end up hurting her, and she runs back

to Jake. Jake knows that he will never be able to have her

for his own, and he accepts this as fact. This is clear when

the Count asks them ?why don?t you get married, you two?

(68)? To this question, they give a lame half hearted

awnser which implies that it will never happen. He is

tolerant of her behavior because he loves her

unconditionally and is willing to overlook everything she

does. Jake?s willingness to endure and forgive Brett?s

promiscuity and infidelity is an indication of the skewed

values of the age. It was an ?anything goes? era right after

the first war, and Jake?s message to Brett seems to be the

same: anything goes as long as you eventually come back to

me.

Jake is forced to accept living in this seemingly

terrible way for more than one reason. He a weak person

socially, but he is also physically disabled because of an

injury that he suffered during the war. He suffered an

injury that caused him to be castrated. The first

hint of this is when he says to Georgeette ?I was hurt in

the war (24) in refrence to why they can not have physical

realtions. This injury is one that makes him insecure, but

worse than that, it allows Brett to have almost complete

control over him. Jake and Brett need each other

emotionally, but Brett feels that she needs more. As a

result Jake is force to give her up.

Jake?s feelings toward his friend Robert Cohn are a

combination jealousy, compassion, understanding, and hate.

These are a very unusual group of feelings for a person to

have toward one person, but it was a very unusual time. Jake

knew of Robert?s relationship with Brett, and it ate him up

with envy, but at the same time he knew how it had ended. He

had been close friends with Robert, and had been through a

similar situation with Brett, so he had both compassion and

understanding for Robert?s position. The only problem was

the way Robert choose to deal with his feelings. Robert also

could not stand to see Brett with another man, but he

displayed this much differently. Robert?s presense bothered

Jake even though they had been close friends. Robert backs

out of a fishing trip to find Brett, and Jake?s friend makes

a comment about that being a good thing. Jake?s only

reply is ?You?re damn right(108)?. Robert makes a fool out

of himself. He even beats up Jake at one point. Behavior

like his was impossible for Jake to respect and he hated

this part of Robert. None of this would have even been a

problem if life during that time had been a little more

solid in a moral sense. Brett would have not been permitted

to act the way she did, while mantaining her social status,

which clearly meant a great deal to her. She would have had

to choose, and most likely her choice would have been that

of a more chaste lifestyle.

In this story, there is a very different way of life

from what people know today. The relationship that Jake and

Brett share is one that would seem completely unrealistic in

today?s time, but to them, it was acceptable. Jake no doubt

would have preferred to have it differently, but he is

accepting of the way it stands. The hardship and the poverty

that is so widely spread in that area during the post war

time causes the people to lower their moral standards. Jake

and Brett?s love is the perfect example.