

Letters

I wanted to clear up a possible misconception included in James H. Meredith's "The Eyewitness Narrator in Hemingway's *Collier's* Dispatches and 'Black Ass at the Cross roads'" (*WLA* Spring/Summer 1995). In his interesting and well-informed essay, Professor Meredith parenthetically states that the word *gen* was "Hemingway's own term for authenticity."

As a Hemingway scholar, Professor Meredith undoubtedly knows, as will many readers of *War, Literature, and the Arts*, the origin of the word *gen*. However, some readers may not, so I would like to make clear that Hemingway did not coin the term, nor was its use peculiar to him. Rather, it was a term in wide use in the RAF during WWII.

Hemingway himself explained the term to Malcolm Cowley in a 1945 letter: "The *gen* is RAF slang for intelligence, the hand out at the briefing. The *true gen* is what they know but don't tell you" (*Selected Letters* 603).

—Matthew C. Stewart
Boston University