

MALE IDENTITY AND RITUALS OF MANHOOD IN HEMINGWAY'S *IN OUR TIME* AND *THE SUN ALSO RISES*

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Ernest Hemingway's biographer's and critics have never doubted that his obsessions with male authority shaped both his writing career and life. An "incorrigible attention-getter and impresario of his need to be situated always center-stage,"¹⁾ Hemingway has been seen by defenders and detractors alike as the quintessential *macho* writer. Interestingly, feminist critics have accepted paradigms formulated decades ago by male critics, even though their conclusions differ radically. Earl Rovit, for instance, claimed that Hemingway "prized the adamant separateness" of the "isolated self," and Rovit's work on codes of masculine behavior, of which the bullfighter's heroism is part, has become standard in the field.²⁾

Feminist writers such as Judith Fetterley argue that Hemingway, locked into infantile and destructive male fantasies of the tough, autonomous

1) A. Robert Lee, "Introduction," *Ernest Hemingways: New Critical Essays*, ed. A Robert Lee (London: Vision Press, 1983), p. 8. Many studies have been devoted to Hemingway's notorious longing to be always "center-stage." See John Raeburn, *Fame Became of Him: Hemingway as Public Writer* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1984); and Scott Donaldson, *By Force of Will: The Life and Art of Ernest Hemingway* (New York: Viking, 1977), pp. 1-9.

2) Earl Rovit and Gerry Brenner, *Ernest Hemingway*, rev. ed. (1963; rpt. Boston: Twayne, 1986), p. 37. See also Philip Young, *Ernest Hemingway* (New York: Rinehart, 1952), pp. 28-50.

male, succeeds only in creating an easily-parodied male posturing.³⁾ Few critics, though, have seen in Hemingway's early works the extent to which the act of performance before an audience constitutes male identity, and even fewer have considered the troubling implications of this. Arising out of an audience's empowering acts of watching, a protagonist's sense of self rests precariously upon the audience's decision to validate or reject his ritual gestures toward manhood. Mastery of the arena bestows power on him, failure invites humiliation: in either case the process implies a radical lack of self that must be constantly filled and refashioned "while the crowd hollered."

In the collection, *In Our Time*, stories like "Indian Camp," "The Doctor and the Doctor's Wife," and "The Battler," Hemingway explores the ways characters watch each other, exhibit their potency, and — more often — reveal their shame. "Big Two-Hearted River" becomes Hemingway's most remarkable effort *In Our Time* to resolve his doubts about self-dramatization. The deliberate separation of action from ritual exhibition in the story contributes to its uniqueness — yet it becomes a dead-end for Hemingway. In *The Sun Also Rises*, the return to a near-obsession with the psychology of self-display and humiliation highlights the limitations of Nick Adams' solution in "Big Two-Hearted River." In none of these stories does Hemingway celebrate a set of merely stereotypical macho

3) See Fetterley, *The Resisting Reader: A Feminist Approach to American Fiction* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1978), pp. 46–71, and Faith Pullin, "Hemingway and the Secret Language of Hate," in *Hemingway: New Critical Essays*, pp. 172–92. And Leonard Kreigel bows far too readily to prevailing opinion when, speaking of Hemingway's life, he argues that "such manhood-posing explains the usual charges levelled against Hemingway ... The man is adolescent. And the writer is, too." "Hemingway's Rites of Manhood," *Partisan Review*, 44 (1977), 418.

values. On the contrary, his explorations of male display challenges precisely the kind of formulations about his myth of the autonomous male that have become customary.

Images of doorways recur throughout "Indian Camp," linking the cabin metaphorically to the womb. But the entrance of Nick's father quickly transforms womb-space into a male arena and associates the baby's struggle to be born with other barely repressed racial and sexual conflicts. The cabin stages a series of cultural and sexual overthrows, in which male midwives (three whites and three Indians) supplant the traditional roles of the "old women" (p. 16) of the camp and in which the white doctor supplants the cultural and parental authority of the Indian father. "Indian Camp" concerns a struggle for male authority which Nick's father tries to achieve by directing the visual dynamics of a space transformed from shanty/womb to operating theater.

The three white characters transgress what has traditionally been an intimate female space. The doctor has been called only after customary procedures of birth, which tacitly preclude the presence of men, fail: "She had been helping her." While this situation allows the doctor to demonstrate his skill, sharing his wife's experience of birth appears to have degraded the Indian father. After all, "The men" (not "the *other* men") of the camp have "moved off up the road to sit in the dark and smoke out of range of the noise she made." In a futile attempt to follow the appropriate male role, the Indian father is also smoking and will soon bury his head in blankets to summon his own darkness.

Already displaced from the authority of the other men's position "off up the road," the Indian father bears unwilling witness while the white doctor dramatizes his superior medical skills. Critics have defended Nick's father on the basis of his pragmatic handling of the operation, but the real

point is that he constantly dramatizes his pragmatism, especially before the eyes of his son, whom he insistently invites to watch: "You see, Nick, babies are supposed to be born head first," "See, it's a boy," "You can watch this or not, Nick," "Ought to have a look at the proud father" (pp. 17-18). The doctor plays out the fantasy of being both director and star actor in his own operating theater, to the point of imagining critical appraisals of his performance: "That's one for the medical journal." Clearly, the doctor's goal is less to initiate his son into the mysteries of birth than to draw attention to his skillful manipulation of those mysteries. As if to underscore the doctor's transgressive role, Hemingway introduces the image of the football player to describe the doctor, who concludes the operation "feeling exalted and talkative as football players are in the dressing room after a game." The image of the football game is oddly appropriate for the conflicts in the cabin. Like the bullring, the football arena functions as a ceremonial space in which particular rules of conduct govern violent action; in both cases the importance of the display increases proportionately as it is watched. Throughout the operation, the doctor more or less consciously plays quarterback, controlling the field of play with his vision and expertise. Here his son, the other "midwives" and (potentially) the reader of some future medical journal act as audience.

The Indian father, in contrast, actively shuns the audience that could witness his degradation; his vision is blocked by the wall he rolls over against and the blanket that covers his head. But this self-willed blindness has complex consequences. The refusal to be seen signifies his humiliation, but it is a refusal that also frees him from watching the doctor's performance. The doctor's subsequent move, as he "mounted on the edge of the lower bunk with the lamp in one hand and looked in" at the dead man, demonstrates the paradoxical efficacy of the Indian's action. In the

context of the doctor's earlier self-display, holding the lamp suggests his attempt to force the "proud father" to acknowledge his own pride in his skill. Actually, the Indian father's ritual suicide forces the doctor into the role of observer and, even more telling, distracts Nick's attention from his father: Nick "had a good view of the upper bunk when his father, the lamp in one hand, tipped the Indian's head back." From Nick's point of view, his father has become the lamp-bearer to illuminate the Indian's final self-dramatization. Following this tableau, the doctor quickly loses his "post-operative exhilaration." On the doctor's arrival, after all, the role of watcher and lamp-bearer was played by an "old woman."

The doctor's authority, in other words, is not absolute; it grows — and diminishes — with his precarious ability to play to an audience. The next story in *In Our Time*, "The Doctor and the Doctor's Wife," essentially replays this drama of power and humiliation while reversing the dramatic structure of "Indian Camp": three Indians are invited into the doctor's garden. His garden, cleared from the surrounding forest and fenced-in (as the presence of gates attests), showcases the psychological battle between him and Dick Boulton. The garden becomes a highly charged symbolic space in which he and the three Indians enact a drama of great significance for their authority as men.

Like "Indian Camp," this story describes the wielding of personal power against a backdrop of cultural conflict. The quarrel over the stolen logs, to begin with, disguises the fact that the garden (like the logs) has been expropriated from the Indians in a centuries-old land-grab. The mark of the scaler's hammer in the log shows that it belongs to "White" and McNally. In the same way, the fence around the white doctor's garden marks the extent of his domain in the forest, the Indian's traditional space, from which the three Indians appear and into which they disappear. The

recognition that the land is stolen as well as the logs deepens the significance of the doctor's shame — it becomes his culture's shame too — and begins to explain why he fails to protect the integrity of his space. The doctor has no ground to stand on because the ground is, morally indefensible as stealing the logs.

Playing quarterback/surgeon in "Indian Camp," the doctor transformed the Indian's cabin into a metaphoric arena; Boulton, conversely, threatens to turn the doctor's space into a real arena (a boxing ring) that will display physical strength rather than scientific knowledge. Appropriately, Hemingway emphasizes the relationship between audience and the (potential) protagonists: "Dick Boulton looked at the doctor," Eddy and Billy Tabeshaw "looked at the doctor," "They could see from his back how angry he was," "They all watched him walk up hill and go inside the cottage." Although the doctor reciprocates in kind (he "looked at Dick Boulton"), he sees only Boulton's conviction of superiority: "He knew how big a man he was." The paradoxical nature of evaluatory observation is evidence here, for whereas an audience empowered the doctor in the Indian's cabin, here it lays bare his inadequacy. Shamed by his ignominious retreat, the doctor withdraws (like the Indian father in "Indian Camp") from the gaze of spectators, leaving the garden/ring in their possession. Boulton, in fact, has re-appropriated the space for a drama of his own devising, in which he has convincingly upstaged the doctor and dispossessed him of his manhood.

These first two stories of *In Our Time* explore male authority in ways that seriously question its nature and value. The doctor's tendency toward almost pathological self-display, the Indian father's suicidal drama, even Boulton's tough assurance, all begin to dispel the myth of the autonomous male. Boulton above all should give us pause, for his identity is nothing but his role as "big man," fabricated out of his consummate acting

before an audience. He differs from the doctor in his ability to play a tough male role, not because of any greater inner worth.

At the end of the first section of the Nick Adams stories, "The Battler," which features an avatar of Nick's father in Ad Francis, links together many of the functions of the symbolic arena registered so far and suggests new perspectives on the role of men within it. Before reaching the clearing where he will find Francis, Nick has already intimated that correlation between evaluatory watching and male identity. Touching his black eye, Nick rather mysteriously, "wished he could see it," and then apparently tries to see his reflection: "Could not see it looking into the water, though" (p. 53). While berating himself for his immaturity, he nonetheless prizes his black eye as one sign of his initiation into manhood: "That was all he had gotten out of it. Cheap at the price." In lieu of the hollering crowd at the bull fight in chapter 9, Nick, another "kid," tries to become the audience to the spectacle of his own maturation.

The ensuing scene bears out that correspondence between manhood and performance. Nick enters the firelit clearing to find Francis using him as audience to Francis' exhibition of toughness. Francis constantly refers to the importance of visible wounds as an index of toughness, acknowledging, for instance, Nick's black eye with his first words ("Where did you get the shiner?") before going on to dramatize his own battered face: "Look here!" and "Ever see one like that?" The echoes of the doctor's comments to Nick in "Indian Camp" are telling, for both insistently draw attention to the iconography of their professions. The doctor's surgical skill warranted the attention of the other "midwives"; and Francis' "pan," manifesting his performances in the ring, signifies his indomitable courage: "I could take it," They couldn't hurt me."

Francis' delight in displaying his battered face provides a key to his

behavior during the rest of the story. For his failure to get Nick's knife destroys his self-image, carefully maintained before Nick, of the heroic prizefighter. Like the doctor, transformed from medical marvel to lamp-bearer in "Indian Camp," Francis becomes the frustrated but passive observer: "The little white man looked at Nick," "He was looking at Nick" (repeated twice), "Ad kept on looking at Nick," "He glared at Nick." Such manic staring suggests Francis' humiliation has grown because of the crowds that witness it. His compensatory solution in the clearing is to recall the scene of his most successful dramatizations of physical prowess: the boxing ring. Thus he does not swing wildly at Nick but adopts the stance of the trained boxer, stepping "flat-footed forward." But the battler's attempt at self-dramatization merely parodies his earlier ability to dominate arenas as he falls unconscious in the most dishonorable way possible — being hit from behind.

Nothing is easier than to see Francis as an archetypal Hemingway hero, beaten but never quite down. In fact, Hemingway confronts in "The Battler" a central dilemma about male identity, which is not Francis' failure but the fact that a successful shaping of manhood is predicated on being acknowledged by an audience. Male identity, this story suggests, is constituted by performance, and when performance no longer serves, identity suffers. Nick knows Francis "by name as a former champion fighter," and the narrator, at the moment when Nick refuses him the knife, calls him the "prizefighter"; Francis has become commensurate with his role, existing as a name, a memory, a set of remembered movements enacted for others. Clubbed in an ugly parody of a boxing match, he fails to perform the expected role and falls unconscious — indicative of his profound absence of self.

The story of Nick's expedition to the Two-Hearted River is perhaps

Hemingway's most remarkable attempt in *Our Time* to attain a new vision of manhood. For the first time the protagonist stands alone, a strategy that divorces ritual gestures from their performative function. Indeed, Hemingway flaunts the lack of a watching crowd as Nick arrives in Seney to find, unexpectedly, that "There was no town" (p. 133). And unlike the Nick of "The Battler," he does not attempt to play audience to his own posturing. At the beginning of "The Battler" Nick tries (unsuccessfully) to see his "shiner" in the water; at the beginning of "Big Two-Hearted River," Nick looks *through* the surface of the water to the trout beneath. Compared to Krebs, who "lost everything" (p. 70) because he was unable to stage his war experiences before other men, Nick's refusal to dramatize his injuries, even to himself, is astonishing.

"Big Two-Hearted River" constructs symbolic arenas in ways that recall earlier stories but recasts them in a different mode. The "good place" (p. 139) of Nick's tent, for instance, is the culmination of a series of references to symbolic arenas in *In Our Time*: the cabin of "Indian Camp" and, more distantly, his actual home (the cottage) in "The Doctor and the Doctor's Wife."⁴ Yet this tent differs importantly from all of them in that it witnesses no exhibition of manhood. As Joseph M. Flora has remarked, the story is in one sense Nick's account of Genesis: nothing suggests that more than his Adamic ability to move into a space devoid of the audience that he has, in the stories of *In Our Time*, customarily watched and celebrated tough males roles.⁵ If anything, Hemingway emphasizes Nick's

4) See also the all-male bedroom, open to the air, the "The Three-Day Blow," the "big hot bedroom" (p. 88) in "Mr. and Mrs. Elliot," and the claustrophobic room of "Cat in the Rain."

5) *Hemingway's Nick Adams* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1982), p. 157.

cultivation of a traditionally female role as he organizes and tends his "home-like" space.

Nick's distinction in "Big Two-Hearted River" is to act within a space of his own making. While Hemingway describes setting up camp and fishing realistically, the meticulous detailing of that process draws attention to the uniqueness of this space, lacking both prior structure and preexisting codes of behavior. Because this space never becomes an arena, "Big Two-Hearted River" at least postulates the existence of an autonomous male identity, fashioned without an empowering audience. In this respect, isolation appears to become a virtue. After all, "crowded streams" (p. 149) to Nick denote botched rituals; dead, furred trout in the rivers, the consequence of inexperienced fishermen, whom Nick, alone, may refuse to emulate. And Nick's bitter coffee at the end of Part I evokes memories of the fishing trip to the Black River, where Hopkins' sudden wealth promotes invidious distinctions between the companions. What "broke up the trip" (p. 141) is not Hopkins' leaving but the conspicuous display of gift-giving that accompanies it.

When alone, Nick can evade the destructive competitiveness that characterizes these "crowded streams," but his isolation leads back, by a new route, to the same dilemma that haunted "The Battler." Francis' desperate attempts to dramatize himself disguised an empty self. The question arises in "Big Two-Hearted River" whether Nick's deliberate refusal to dramatize his ritual actions can be potent. Contextually, his actions do take on significance: cleaning the two trout recalls the Caesarian of "Indian Camp," yet the results of Nick's incisions, "clean and compact, are far removed from the blood and terror of the Indian's cabin. Dramatically and psychologically, however, the value of such restorative rituals is less obvious. The story records an odd displacement in which the act of see-

ing constantly effaces identity, a process that is not obvious until, at a moment of profound shock, the "I" irrupts into the text: "By God, he was the biggest one I ever heard of" (p. 151). At every other point Nick becomes little other than a recording consciousness, carefully choking off thoughts and memories that would force him to become aware of himself. The consequence is that Nick always stands center stage yet is never dramatically visible at all.

Critics have tended to view this displacement as a psychologically necessary strategy for healing Nick's war-fragmented self and have argued about whether his final promise to "fish the swamp" signifies the completion of that process. In the light of Hemingway's larger concern with evaluatory watching, it becomes clear that such analyses have inverted the meaning of Nick's actions. Significant as those actions are on an anagogical level, they cannot fashion a self because Nick constantly defers the self-awareness that would make them psychologically potent. Nick, as Peter Schwenger puts it, has "no way to deal with the emotion ... except by the very strategies of detachment which threaten him."⁶ While the absence of audience removes the need for the puerile self-display of "The Battle," that absence makes impossible the completion of self. In story after story of *In Our Time*, Hemingway has demonstrated (however ironically) that manhood corresponds with being seen as a man, and "Big Two-Hearted River" does not essentially deny that thesis. In successfully avoiding "crowded streams," Nick also erases all opportunity for the self-dramatization that empowered characters like the "kid" and Villalta. Whatever therapeutic actions Nick generates from his experience on the river can

6) *Phallic Critiques* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984), p. 46. The direct context of Schwenger's comment here is Hemingway's "A Way You'll Never Be."

only be partial gestures toward a manhood whose completion depends on the legitimating function of an audience.

The separation of ritual gesture from dramatization in "Big Two-Hearted River" resolves little for Hemingway. If Nick comports himself as a man at the sacred river, no one — scarcely even Nick himself — is there to acknowledge and validate his manhood. As another observer-figure at places of ritual, Jake Barnes shares with Nick the displacement of self into seeing. H. R. Stoneback has argued persuasively that in *The Sun Also Rises* "Hemingway is one of the great cartographers of the *deus loci*."⁷ Yet if Jake's pilgrimage to sacred places wins spiritual peace, his psychological travail in the arenas where men demonstrate their potency is painful indeed. In particular, the key scenes where Pedro Romero performs in the bull ring before the eyes of Brett and Jake force a complete reconsideration of the usual claims about the moral, mythic, or spiritual significance of the ritual encounter, and about the psychic renewal Jake gains from it.

Watching Romero typifies Jake's role in this novel, which is firmly established as that of observer and sometimes seer. "I have a rotten habit of picturing the bedroom scenes of my friends," remarks Jake in the second chapter.⁸ His impotence has transformed his friends' acts into theater and himself into director: his visionary ability appears to be at once a product of and compensation for his inability to participate in his own scenes.⁹ In another sense, Jake's "rotten habit" corresponds to that pas-

7) "From the rue Saint-Jacques to the Pass of Roland to the 'Unfinished Church on the Edge of the Cliff,'" *Hemingway Review*, 6 (1986), 27.

8) *The Sun Also Rises* (New York: Scribner's, 1926), p. 13. Further citations of this edition are in the text.

9) In the past decade there has been a swing back toward the idea of Jake as privileged observer. Allen Josephs, for instance, remarks that "Jake understands better than anyone because only Jake moves freely and knowingly in ↗

sionate witnessing which is his aficion. They "saw that I had aficion" (p. 132), claims Jake of Montoya's friends, as if aficion is a matter of seeing true rather than of interrogation. Several other characters comment on Jake's perceptiveness. Romero remarks: "I like it very much that you like my work...But you haven't seen it yet. To-morrow, if I get a good bull, I will try and show it to you" (p. 174). And then Jake advises Montoya (to the hotel keeper's pleasure) not to give Romero the invitation from the American ambassador, Montoya asks Jake three times to "look" (pp. 171–72) for him. Cast as the archetypal observer by other men who accept his evaluations of their endeavors, Jake has managed to transform observation itself into a kind of powerful witnessing. The closing scenes at Pamplona, however, will show how flimsy his authority truly is.

Approved by the adoring crowd as well as by Jake's expert appraisal, Romero's victories in the bull ring after the beating by Cohn are not only the narrative conclusion of Book II; they become the focus of Jake's own attempts to redeem his impotence. Jake perceives Romero's painful trial in the ring as a testing and affirmation of the matador's spirit — and perhaps, since Jake is another survivor of Cohn's assaults, as a vicarious affirmation of his own spirit: "The fight with Cohn had not touched his spirit but his face had been smashed and his body hurt. He was wiping that out now. Each thing that he did with this bull wiped that out a little cleaner" (p. 219). Romero's process of recuperation, to Jake, depends upon a complex relationship between being watched and disavowing the watching audience (Brett in particular).

For *Sun*, and for Hemingway's early work in general, interpretation of

↘ both the profane world of the Lost Generation and the sacred world of the *toreo* — "Toreo: The Moral Axis of *The Sun Also Rises*," *Hemingway Review*, 6 (1986), 93 See also Stoneback, p. 11.

this passage is crucial: "Everything of which he could control the locality he did in front of her all that afternoon. Never once did he look up. He made it stronger that way, and did it for himself, too, as well as for her. Because he did not look up to ask if it pleased he did it for her, too. But he did not do it for her at any loss to himself. He gained by it all through the afternoon" (p. 216). Jake's conundrum of profit and loss (if Romero did it "all" for himself, what could be left for Brett?) involves, once again, the matador's intimate relationship with his audience. Unlike Villalta, who played to the crowd, Romero, "did not look up" and thus, according to Jake, "did it all for himself inside." Even at the end of the fight, when the crowd tries to raise him in triumph, this most reticent of actors tries to resist: "He did not want to be carried on people's shoulders" (p. 221). Yet by defying the rules of performance in Hemingways' quintessential arena, Romero appears to Jake to increase the potency of his actions — a formulation that seems to contradict those many scenes in *In Our Time* where a man's prestige is seen to depend on the legitimating approval of an audience.

Most critics have concurred with Jake. Lawrence R. Broer speaks of the "self-contained Romero," Mark Spilka agrees that Romero's "manhood is a thing independent of women," and Allen Josephs has written in a similar vein that Romero is an "innocent."¹⁰ Yet Romero's mode of asserting his manhood is far more self-consciously part of a "system of authority" (p. 185) than Jake (like the critics) perceives. All of Romero's

10) Broer, *Hemingway's Spanish Tragedy* (University: Univ. of Alabama Press, 1973), p. 49; Spilka, "The Death of Love in *The Sun Also Rises*," in *Twelve Original Essays on Great American Novels*, ed. Charles Shapiro (Detroit: Wayne State Univ. Press, 1958), p. 250; Josephs, p. 92. Earl Rovit (p. 39) also writes about the "self-containment" of the Hemingways tutor (code-hero).

actions, in fact, are unashamedly theatrical: he performs as close to Brett as possible; he follows the wishes of the audience when, with the second bull, "the crowd made him go on" (p. 219), and proceeds to give a complete exhibition of bullfighting. He also holds his posture as consciously as any actor: he "finished with a half-veronica that turned his back on the bull and came away toward the applause, his hand on his hip, his cape on his arm, and the bull watching his back going away" (p. 217).¹¹⁾ Romero dispenses with the audience only because the audience is there. He never once looks up because the arena supplies an audience that looks down, celebrating his actions for him. At the dramatic climax of the fight, the presentation of the bull's ear to Brett takes on significance precisely because it happens before an audience. As Jake describes it, "he leaned up against the barrera and gave the ear to Brett. He nodded his head and smiled. The crowd were all about him. Brett held down the cape." The crowd here is not merely an element of the scene: it is "all about," the element that creates a scene, converting the act of giving into a ceremony and transforming these actors into celebrities.

Considering the subtle but insistent theatricality of Romero's performance, the motives behind Jake's assertion that he does it "all for himself inside" become more complex than critics have generally recognized. Christian Messenger is not unusual in claiming that Romero "provides Jake Barnes with a hero whom Jake can learn from and appreciate by spectatorial comprehension of the sporting rite."¹²⁾ Yet Jake's role at the

11) Romero, as another scene shows, is an accomplished actor. In the cafe with Brett and Jake, he "tipped his hat down over his eyes and changed the angle of his cigar and the expression of his face ... He had mimicked exactly the expression of Nacional" (p. 186).

12) Messenger, p. 251.

ringside is actually far more than that of spectator, student, and teacher (for, as Messenger also notes, Jake constantly invites Brett to “watch how” [p. 167] Romero performs). Jake, in fact represses the element of theatricality in Romero’s actions because of his own failure, in crucial scenes, to control the way he displays himself. A complete characterization of Jake, then, must include the dramas of humiliation in which he plays the lead role.

The key scene where Jake tacitly pimps for Brett in the cafe quickly becomes, once more, a drama of evaluatory watching. Brett claims, “I can’t look at him” (p. 184), but Romero (as his performance in the bull ring suggests) is eager to display himself, quickly inviting Brett to “look” and “see [the] bulls in my hand.” As befits his active participation in bringing Romero and Brett together, however, it is Jake who finally stands center stage. On leaving the cafe, Jake notices that the “hard-eyed people at the bull-fighter table watched me go” and comments dryly, “It was not pleasant.” Several things are not pleasant for Jake here: the sense that Romero has usurped him sexually, the sense that he has betrayed his tough male role by pimping for Brett. Above all, it is not pleasant that his failures are played out before a crowd of aficionados that watches and judges him.

Jake’s appreciation of Romero’s disdain for the crowd takes on a richer significance in the context of his humiliating failure to dramatize himself successfully before the “hard-eyed people.” In the cafe, for the first time in the novel, he inadvertently steps into the part hitherto enacted by characters like Romero and Dick Boulton: a man dramatizing his manhood before other men. Jake not only fails in this tough male role, he also betrays, before his co-aficionados, his compensatory ability to watch and evaluate others’ masculine behavior. Every potent action of Romero’s in

the bullring thus recalls a double failure on Jake's part. It is telling that he prefaces his account of Romero's victories in the ring with a long description of Belmonte, another man who has a "crowd... actively against him" (p. 214), and who also "watched" Romero perform. Belmonte's motives are Jake's: both men have suffered the contempt of the crowd, and both jealously watch Romero enact what they will never again possess.

In the two great works that begin his career, Hemingway returns almost obsessively to the arenas where, he suggests, men typically act out their dramas of power and shame. Some of these characters (Romero, Boulton, Villalta) demonstrate the authority accruing to the successful self-dramatist. More often, exposure to the watching crowd brings humiliation: in crucial scenes, Jake and Nick's father reach center stage only to display their inadequacy. Audiences may be disappointing, as Nick realizes in chapter 6 of *In Our Time*, but more importantly they function as legitimating agents for men's images of themselves. Nick's pilgrimage to the river in "Big Two-Hearted River" appears to deny this sense of male potency validated by the crowd; actually, the very strategy Nick uses to acquire wholeness contributes to the incompleteness of self. Jake, witness *par excellence*, emulates Nick in cultivating an impression of the detached, potent observer. Yet Jake's valorization of Romero clearly disguises his own complex feelings about his failures to dramatize himself; seeing for Jake is not an antidote for his sexual impotency but rather another factor of it.

Taking their cue from the ostentatious swagger of Hemingway's life, critics have rarely credited him with a complex view of manhood. The evidence of *In Our Time* and *The Sun Also Rises*, however, suggests that his ambivalence about the way men fashion a powerful male identity has been little understood. Hemingway's work severely disables the myth of

the autonomous male individual. Characters like Boulton and Romero are authoritative men; yet they derive their charisma from manipulating an audience which then participates in the establishment of their power. Though Nick's father, Ad Francis, and Jake look weak by contrast, the strategies by which they seek power are the same. Performance itself does not guarantee manhood; but manhood does require successful performance. Fashioning manhood "while the crowd hollers" and looks on is the crucial drama men undertake in Hemingway's early work: the moment when his characters undergo their most intense experience of authority or humiliation.