

# Bullfighting in the sun also rises

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Jonathan Rowe Essay 1: The Sun Also Rises English 42DoctorSpeirs

3/28/2010 No Bull in Bullfighting In The Sun Also Rises, Ernest Hemingway writes " nobody ever lives their life all the way up except bull-fighters" (100). Spoken by Jake, this line exemplifies the importance that bullfighting plays in the novel.

It's not only portrayed as a sport, but rather as a complex, mathematical art in the form of a dance between the bull and fighter. The matador scene in chapter 18 is perhaps one of the richest in the novel due to it's use of symbols. The choreography between Romero and the bull is reflective not only of the characterization of Brett and Jake, but of the relationship between Brett, her masculinity, and her effect on the other male characters. It also provides penetrating insight to the role that Robert Cohn plays as a foil, and how he contrasts with the other characters. The most prominent correlation that the bullfighting scene carries in terms of symbolism is a parallel to Brett's sexuality. On a closer inspection, the fight also resembles an improvised dance between two partners. Each dancer has a designated terrain, and " as long as a bullfighter stays in his own terrain he is comparatively safe" (213).

And a dance between two partners can be compared to the tumultuous events that love can bring, for example the relationship between Brett and Jake. It's interesting to note that early in the novel, Brett responds to Jake's inquiry of living together by saying that she'd just " tromper" him (55), a French word meaning to abuse and cheat. The diction almost resembles an animalistic quality, as well as the word " trample," foreshadowing the symbolism behind the bullfighting scene. Just like Romero is luring and enticing the bull with his cape, Brett lures men with her charisma and charm,

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and refuses to bring any meaningful relationship to fruition. The diction of the scene involving Romero and the bull also carries some sexual overtones. Romero had to “ make the bull consent with his body,” (217) creating an image where the man and “ the bull were all one sharply etched mass” (217). In terms of symbolism, Romero is reflective of Brett, and the bull represents the men that Brett seduces.

His method is to be “ all so slow and so controlled” (217) at first, to lure the bull into proximity. Similarly, Brett lures men in with her brazen sexuality. The end result is the same however, with the bull and the men she's involved with. Romero will fight and kill the bull, just like Brett will lure men and eventually leave them. It's “ all for sport, all for pleasure” (208). Brett's attraction to Romero can be explained in terms of his masculinity. Romero is somewhat of a perfect male, he's an aficionado, brave, beautiful, and held in very high esteem by everyone he encounters as well as being the favorite fighter of the crowd.

He resembles Brett's masculinity. She's given a unisex name, has short hair, and even refers to everyone as “ chaps. ” She seems to mingle only with other men, possibly because she's shunned by other females for her promiscuity. While Romero and the bull most closely represent Brett and Jake, upon closer inspection another similarity can be drawn between Belmonte and Robert Cohn. Belmonte is a symbol for Cohn and his relationship with the other characters. Just like how Belmonte serves as a foil to the decadent style of Mercial and valor of Romero, Cohn is a foil to the other characters around him. While Romero would tease the audience with

his graceful style and fighting close to the bull, Belmonte, now resuming bullfighting out of retirement, simply “ gave the sensation of coming tragedy” and only gave the illusion of being close to the bull.

He was once a great fighter, but now refuses to subscribe to the new “ decadent” (215) bullfighting style. His fighting style represents Cohn in the sense that they both had their shining moment—Cohn's brief relationship with Brett, and Belmonte's glory days of bullfighting: which they're still trying to win back. Belmonte stands apart from the other fighters because he adheres to an traditional form of fighting. Similarly, Cohn is the only character with no involvement in the war, he preserves a sort of innocence and value system that disappeared with the “ lost generation. ” He tries to preserve the idea that sex equals intimacy and love, and throughout the novel his clumsy attempts to win back Brett are reflective of his refusal to understand that his brief relationship with Brett was simply a series of sexual encounters, nothing more. In conclusion, part of what makes Hemingway's style so unique is that he simply shows, without much telling. The matador scene in chapter 18 is rich because it provides penetrating insight with it's symbolism; Lady Brett with her elusive nature with men is captured through Romero's matador technique.

The fact that Romero penetrates the bull with his sword accentuates the inherent masculinity that Brett displays—a sort of role reversal. Chapter 18 also highlights the character of Cohn, and his role as a foil and it's parallels to Belmonte's traditional fighting style.