Reading Hemingway’s *Men Without Women*
READING HEMINGWAY SERIES
ROBERT W. LEWIS, EDITOR

Reading Hemingway’s *The Sun Also Rises*
   H. R. Stoneback

Reading Hemingway’s *Men Without Women*
   Joseph M. Flora
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GLOSSARY AND COMMENTARY

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The Kent State University Press
KENT, OHIO
CONTENTS

Preface and Acknowledgments ix
Series Note xvii
Reading *Men Without Women*
   The Undefeated 3
   In Another Country 31
   Hills Like White Elephants 42
   The Killers 54
   Che Ti Dice la Patria? 70
   Fifty Grand 81
   A Simple Enquiry 104
   Ten Indians 111
   A Canary for One 122
   An Alpine Idyll 131
   A Pursuit Race 138
   Today Is Friday 145
   Banal Story 155
   Now I Lay Me 163
Works Cited 178
Index 183
When *Men Without Women* appeared in bookstores in October 1927, Ernest Hemingway was riding the fame that *The Sun Also Rises* had just secured him. Wishing to build on that foundation, Maxwell Perkins, his Scribners editor, had encouraged a second collection of short stories. Perkins believed that short stories, especially when collected, helped keep the public aware of an author and helped prepare the way for the novel in progress. Perkins knew, of course, that Hemingway had been writing and publishing stories—an important part of the young writer’s efforts to secure an adequate income. He also knew how good Hemingway could be in that genre. It had been, after all, Hemingway’s stories that brought Perkins to champion Hemingway’s genius. The introduction had come through F. Scott Fitzgerald, who had been awed by the force of Hemingway’s eighteen vignettes that William Bird’s Three Mountain Press had published in 1924 as *in our time* in a run of 170 copies. (The next year those vignettes became interchapters for the sixteen short stories of Hemingway’s first commercially published book; it used the same title of its predecessor but with standard capitalization: *In Our Time*.) Fitzgerald admonished Perkins to do whatever was necessary to get Hemingway away from the publisher Boni and Liveright and under the more prestigious Scribners imprint. In one of the most craftily plotted schemes in twentieth-century publishing, Perkins and Hemingway maneuvered to fulfill the legalities of his contract with Boni and Liveright and then enter into agreement with Scribners, where he would remain. Boni and Liveright had first right of refusal on Hemingway’s next book. So he quickly wrote *The Torrents of Spring*, a parody of Sherwood Anderson, their famous author. As Hemingway expected, Boni and Liveright balked, and Hemingway was free to go elsewhere. Scribners quickly published the novel in 1926.

Hemingway’s good fortune in having Perkins as editor was soon manifest. The reviews of *Men Without Women* left no doubt that Ernest Hemingway ranked among the major talents of the era. This was a collection of stories that could not be ignored. If some of the reviews caused Hemingway distress, Perkins was greatly pleased by the response. “Not one harsh note in the critical chorus,” he headlined an advertisement teeming with glowing quotes that he forwarded to the author. Charles Scribner could rest assured that Perkins had made a good decision. Hemingway had to be pleased by
the brisk pace of sales, which far exceeded those of most story collections, and he was soon earning more from his writing than he had at any other time in his life.

But money could not be for Hemingway—nor for us—the ultimate measure of a book’s worth. Let’s look more closely at the publication of *Men Without Women*.

The first review that Hemingway saw was by Virginia Woolf in the *New York Herald Tribune Books*. Beginning with reflections on the difficult task presented reviewers, she admits that there is ample room for a reviewer to miss the mark. Hemingway scholars, who have pondered the text longer than Woolf or most reviewers could, concur that Woolf did miss the mark. She objected to the heightened masculinity of the book emphasized in its title (“ferocious virility,” Cyril Connolly called it), disliked his characters and compared them unfavorably to those of Chekhov and Maupassant, and faulted his overreliance on dialogue. She had to grant Hemingway a place among the moderns but did not find him modern in ways she and her circle championed. But no reader of her review—to which the entire first page of the book section (and more) was given—could doubt Hemingway’s importance. *Men Without Women* received the kind of attention that would go to a novel. And it is likely that the modernity for which Woolf faulted Hemingway was the kind many found compelling. Her review alone reveals that the author of *The Sun Also Rises* had won his place in the major leagues.

Edmund Wilson, equal to Woolf’s authority for American readers, ably countered the criticism that naysayers had voiced. In a lengthy review in the *New Republic*, he judged Hemingway’s characters, notably Nick Adams and Jake Barnes, as “highly civilized persons of rather complex temperament and extreme sensibility.” He grasped that *Men Without Women* bore important relationships to *In Our Time*. Clearly, he had more than passing familiarity with Hemingway’s earlier work and could speak with an authority that Woolf, Joseph Wood Krutch (the *Nation*), Lee Wilson Dodd (the *Saturday Review of Literature*), and Cyril Connolly (the *New Statesman*) could not match. But even these adverse voices had to bow toward the young writer. Krutch cited a “virtuosity not short of amazing” and called the stories “painfully good.” Dodd admitted to being “amazed” and “admired the lean virtuosity.” Connolly judged Hemingway “easily the ablest of the wild band of Americans in Europe.”

In the *Bookman*, Burton Rascoe chose to emphasize the great merits of “Fifty Grand” and “The Killers,” while admiring the “clean and incisive style” of the totality. In the *American Mercury*, H. L. Mencken praised the same two stories as “things to be sincerely thankful for.” This was a good deal from the Sage of Baltimore, who had not been won over by *The Sun Also Rises* nor by Hemingway’s preference for the “fragmentary.”

If attention from the luminaries matters, so does anonymous attention in the right place. How to put a price on the unsigned review in the 24 October issue of *Time*, which, like some of the other important reviews, carried a likeness of the author? Unlike Woolf’s more general reflections, this reviewer gives attention to
the whole book, though he is sometimes careless with details. Still, the review ends by declaring *Men Without Women* a worthy companion to the powerful *The Sun Also Rises*. It describes the stories as “clear and crisp and perfectly shaped as icicles, as sharp as splinters of glass. It is impossible to read them without realizing that seldom if ever before has a writer been able to cut so deeply into life with the 26 curved tools of the English alphabet.”

Publication of *Men Without Women* announced that the young Hemingway would be making his mark in short fiction as much as in the novel. For him, the short story was a congenial genre for the modernist sensibility. Indeed, *In Our Time* had already revealed his discovery that short stories, when gathered for a book, lent themselves to the larger aims of the novel. In many ways, *Men Without Women* mirrors that earlier experiment in form. (Later, Hemingway would virtually embed several novels in the great “The Snows of Kilimanjaro”; the dying protagonist is a writer who remembers incidents of his life that he should have written about but didn't.) Hemingway wrote several novels that continue to compel readers—though the novels have never eclipsed the great stories. Harold Bloom wrote: “It could be argued persuasively that Hemingway is the best short-story writer in the English language from Joyce's *Dubliners* until the present” (3). *Men Without Women* would doubtless play an important role in any such argument. Looking back at the publication of that book, Kenneth Lynn judged: “If *Men Without Women* was not destined to become the most widely influential book of short stories ever published by a twentieth-century American author, that was only because it followed *In Our Time*” (366). Benét's Reader's Encyclopedia of American Literature declared: “Some of the finest examples of Hemingway's mastery of description, dialogue, and atmosphere appear in this volume” (Perkins, Perkins, and Leininger 702). Hemingway himself sensed no diminishment from *In Our Time*. He wrote Maxwell Perkins that it had taken him five years to write the stories of *In Our Time* and five years to write the stories for *Men Without Women* (Letters 273). That a study of *Men Without Women* takes its place in the Kent State University Press series dedicated to exegeses of Hemingway's chief works is entirely appropriate.

The aim of this book is not, of course, to have the final word on the meaning of the stories that compose *Men Without Women*. Rather, the study attempts to probe the events of each story as we encounter them. It seeks to explain historical references, to identify allusions, to see how form suggests meaning. To borrow Robert Lewis's metaphor, the study is intended as a tourist guide. Those who have traveled the route often will find much that is familiar, but more recent travelers may find material that will open the stories in new ways. My hope is that even travelers familiar with the Hemingway terrain will find unexpected rewards.

For the journey, I begin with a brief introduction to each story. For examination of the story itself, I have selected segments of text to focus attention on, for which I cite page and line numbers from the Finca Vigía edition of *The Complete Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway*. 

**PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**  xi
The illustrations near the middle of the book provided me an opportunity to accent key thematic values, not just for the story that occasioned the choice but for the work as a whole.

From the start, *Men Without Women* seems intent on destabilizing the reader, placing that reader in unfamiliar territory. Literally and figuratively, the reader is “in another country.” The first photograph depicts Madrid’s Puerta del Sol, much as it would have looked when Hemingway first saw this square and recognized its emotional power as the Gate of the Sun and the heart of the Spanish capital. Immersion into Spain is integral to the experience of *Men Without Women*. For Hemingway, nothing was more revealing about the Spanish soul than the corrida. Two illustrations represent the bullfight, the central drama of “The Undefeated,” the long story that Hemingway placed first. Hemingway often played the teacher, and one of his goals in the story was to educate Americans about the corrida. A matador is the chief player in that drama, but he works with a team. The crucial member of the matador’s team is the picador, who from his horse “pics” the bull and prepares him for the mortal combat with the matador. Zurito is the extraordinary picador of “The Undefeated.” The professional in the second photograph is meant to evoke that majestic figure. Following the picador, we see the matador at the climactic moment of the kill, the moment that, more than any other, tests his quality. It represents what might lead an aficionado (Hemingway’s term for the knowledgeable and sympathetic spectator; see Hemingway’s “An Explanatory Glossary” in *Death in the Afternoon*) to feel something akin to Henry James’s announcement of his own death: “So here it is at last, the distinguished thing.” Both illustrations show a man on trial in a public arena, to be judged rightly or wrongly by the multitude. Both accent the masculine emphasis that disturbed Virginia Woolf. The picador and matador in the pictures are in bright sunlight, a condition integral to the ideal corrida. I hope that the reader of this book will look back a second time and then imagine these figures in the darkness of a nocturnal corrida, the only assignment that Manuel, the bullfighter of “The Undefeated,” can obtain.

The Manuel of “The Undefeated” owes much to Hemingway’s appreciation for the young torero known as Maera, who died from pneumonia rather than in the bullring. His death provides the stark ending to the brief “Banal Story.” As its title suggests, that narrative is about story as well as about history. Metafiction is a recurrent theme in *Men Without Women*. The reader who turns to the photographs of Maera that Hemingway selected to illustrate his *Death in the Afternoon* will be well rewarded.

Though several stories show us Americans in Europe, Hemingway calls none to our attention in the opening story. Eventually, however, the collection makes America important in the book’s dynamic, even when it does not seem to do so. The American presence in Europe is clearly to the fore in “Hills Like White Elephants,” with the railroad station near Casetas in the Ebro Valley of Spain giving Hemingway the setting for his story of two American travelers. Making adjustments to the setting as necessary to heighten meaning, he created one of the most haunting stories
of the tension between the sexes in the twentieth century. Travel, speed, uncertain destinations, and uncertain relationships play across this and other stories of Men Without Women. Like T. S. Eliot’s The Waste Land (the 1922 poem that is the essence of high modernism), Men Without Women has a pronounced international flavor. Not surprisingly, structural and thematic connections between Hemingway’s book and Eliot’s poem are numerous.

Men Without Women creates a literary landscape that highlights motion, transience, hotels, rented rooms, hospitals. Two Nick Adams stories in the book demand reflection on domestic structures; those structures help define the gender issues important to the book as a whole.

When only weeks old, Ernest Hemingway had been carried from the house in Oak Park, Illinois, where he had been born, to the shores of Walloon Lake in northern Michigan. The family built there a cottage that his mother named Windemere. Here Hemingway spent summers during his childhood and early manhood; here he would spend his honeymoon following his marriage to Hadley Richardson on 3 September 1921. By then the cottage had expanded from the one Ernest first entered. Primarily, the cottage represented the values that we associate with Dr. Clarence E. Hemingway, Ernest’s father. In time, Grace Hall Hemingway, Ernest’s mother, had to escape her husband’s house and eventually insisted on building Grace Cottage on the other side of the lake, where she would sometimes retreat. Significantly, Nick’s father is the one with whom Nick shares the cottage in “Ten Indians.” The family cottage is an important structure in “The Doctor and the Doctor’s Wife,” but we never see Nick in the family cottage in that In Our Time story—even when his mother summons him to her room. When in In Our Time a Nick now in young manhood enters a cottage in “The Three-Day Blow,” it is the cottage of his friend Bill, and it is sharply defined as a space for men without women.

In Charles M. Oliver’s ever-useful Ernest Hemingway A to Z the reader can find a photograph (353) of Windemere as one would see it coming from the lake. That view shows the public face of a family. Illustrations #5 and #6 of this book take us inside that family cottage, views that invite reflection on the family dramas enacted there. A look inside the fictional Adams cottage is even rarer. In Men Without Women, “Ten Indians” provides a revealing visit inside.

Shown in photograph #7 is the Hemingway home in Oak Park, Illinois, 600 North Kenilworth Avenue at the corner of Iowa Street. A side view would highlight even more the massiveness of the house—planned by Grace and built with funds from her inheritance upon the death of her father. To the left, we see a large music room, one befitting her successful career as a teacher of voice. The music room dwarfs the medical suite at the front of the house where her husband saw his patients. (In her later years, Grace sold the house, and subsequent owners removed the music room.) In the final story of Men Without Women Nick remembers a house very like this one, and the memory is painful. In no Hemingway story do
we see Nick inside the family house. The domestic structures evoked in this book reflect a powerful dynamic of Hemingway’s fiction.

The final photograph shows Lt. Ernest Hemingway back in Oak Park in 1918; it was in many ways a troubled homecoming. Like Nick Adams in “Now I Lay Me,” the final story of *Men Without Women*, Hemingway would ponder the heritage of the house that his mother had built and what he had learned as an ambulance driver from the crucible of duty on the Italian front in the Great War (World War I). Tellingly, the photograph shows him outside Oak Park High School, where he first gained praise for his fledgling fiction. The reader might recall the rural schoolhouse that the Garner family and Nick Adams pass on their journey home after their “swell” Fourth of July in Petoskey in “Ten Indians.” (Constance Cappel Montgomery provided a glimpse of this school in her *Hemingway in Michigan.*) Nick never attended this school, but its presence in the story accents the education that Nick receives before the day ends. His lesson is painful. Each of the Nick Adams stories in the book furthers his education, and the training is sometimes harsh.

The photograph of Hemingway beside his high school should also remind us that he had come close to death from an Austrian trench mortar. Recuperation would be lengthy, as would the recuperation from the end of his romance with the American nurse Agnes von Kurowsky, who had helped care for him in a Milan hospital. That recuperation helped shape “Now I Lay Me.” The first story having established the bullfight as an arena to study death, the last story further explores the arena of war. War and its aftermath are also dominant motifs of the book as a whole—as is the possibility for recuperation.

My own journey with Hemingway’s stories began when I was an undergraduate. In freshman English we read “The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber” in *The Quarto of Modern Literature*; everything in the story seemed important, and I cared greatly. The next year in a sophomore elective, I revisited Macomber and encountered for the first time “My Old Man” and “In Another Country.” The textbook was *Ten Modern Masters: An Anthology of the Short Story*. The instructor did not have to labor to convince me that Hemingway was a master. And so he has seemed ever since. In time I would have the privilege of exploring his stories and novels with bright college students and with adults in post-baccalaureate settings. Hemingway was always among the most teachable of writers. Increasingly, he became one of my chief subjects for study. His stories contain secrets—secrets inviting rereading and providing unexpected rewards. In part, this study has been a search for secrets I missed in earlier readings.

My debts are many. The first “critics” to aid my understanding would be those early teachers. In graduate school, I discovered the first great wave of Hemingway scholarship. Those voices are now stilled, but their words on the page continue to merit attention. Meanwhile, other critical voices have been eager to share their
findings. The pace of discovery has quickened considerably in the past decades as previously unpublished Hemingway material has appeared. Hemingway could still seem very wonderful, but in ways few readers in his lifetime imagined. There is more than a little truth in the proclamation of Nancy R. Comley and Robert Scholes: “The Hemingway you were taught about in high school is dead. Viva el nuevo Hemingway” (146). The Hemingway Society added immeasurably to the excitement of my Hemingway explorations. Many people I knew only in print became colleagues and often friends.

For encouragement, support, and suggestions on this project I must salute especially Robert W. Lewis, general editor for this series, and two readers who generously gave of their time by giving my efforts the benefit of their vast experience. Thank you, Larry Grimes; thank you, Bickford Sylvester. Barbara Sylvester also gave the manuscript the benefit of her trained eye. A special tip of the hat also to the late Paul Smith and the late Jim Hinkle for inspiration, encouragement, and knowledge.

It was a privilege to have the ever-generous Michael Reynolds as a close neighbor while he taught at North Carolina State University and also to have Linda Wagner-Martin join the faculty of my department. Linda often shared Hemingway news and books, and inevitably we would talk Hemingway together with graduate students. Reynolds Price, at Duke University, only eight miles away, has stood steadfastly as a Hemingway enthusiast. He calls himself perhaps Hemingway’s greatest admirer.

Farther from home base, I would have frequent opportunity to talk Hemingway with John Fenstermaker, Allen Josephs, and Linda Miller. Although I might mention virtually the entire membership of the Hemingway Society, I would be remiss did I not thank, and praise, Susan F. Beegel, H. R. Stoneback, Jim Meredith, Jack Benson, Bert Bender, Earl Rovit, Gerry Brenner, Scott Donaldson, Paul Montgomer, and Jack Bryer.

Skilled with a camera as well as a text, Allen Josephs understood the moments I wanted to accent with illustration and shared his slides. In Spain, José Ortiz Sánchez located photographs of Madrid’s Puerta del Sol. For the photograph shared here I thank the Museo Municipal de Madrid. For the photograph of the Hemingway house in Oak Park and for the photographs of Windemere interiors, I am indebted to the Marceline Hemingway Sanford Collection and to the Ernest Hemingway Foundation of Oak Park as well as to Gwenda Connor, administrative director of the foundation. A tip of the hat to Barbara Ballinger, who on short notice led me to the Windemere archives. I thank also Neal Morris at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill for his professional skill in getting the illustrations into digital format.

At the University of North Carolina, chair of the English department James Thompson furthered the project by granting me a research leave. Information, kindnesses, and encouragement have come from Susan Marston, Boone Turchi, Helen Brantley, Frank C. Wilson, Rebecca Christenberry, and indubitably Christine Flora.
The enthusiasm of the Kent State University Press for the Reading Hemingway Series has been constant. Joanna Hildebrand Craig, former assistant director and editor-in-chief, became an active participant in the Hemingway Society. Mary D. Young, managing editor, has demonstrated support no less vigorous. Able guides they have been. I was fortunate to have Sonia Fülöp as my copyeditor. She asked the right questions, reflecting no doubt her familiarity with matters Hemingway gained by her copyediting of H. R. Stoneback’s *Reading Hemingway’s The Sun Also Rises*. Working with the practiced hands at the Press has been a pleasure. I thank them all.

**Joseph M. Flora**

Chapel Hill, North Carolina
The following commentaries are keyed to the page and line numbers of *The Complete Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway*, the Finca Vigía Edition, Charles Scribner’s Sons. The stories that comprise *Men Without Women* begin on page 183 and conclude on page 282 of this edition. Line numbers begin with the first line of each page.

The commentaries can be read in tandem with *Men Without Women*, story by story, or all together after a complete reading of the whole text. The guide is like other reference works that may be consulted variously by different readers. We believe this *Reading Hemingway* book will greatly increase one’s pleasure in and understanding of *Men Without Women* one of Hemingway’s finest works.
As the first story in the book, “The Undefeated” bears special importance. As lead story, it accents Hemingway’s acclaim following the 1926 publication of *The Sun Also Rises*, his first major novel. But justification for the position of the story far exceeds any commercial promotion. The placement is important to the thematic development of the collection. With the female presence more distanced in “The Undefeated” than in any of the thirteen stories of the book, the story merits priority as a story about men without women. It is certainly about the identity of one’s self through profession. And while the narrative passionately studies the art of bullfighting, it speaks also to the art of writing—a concern that keeps surfacing throughout the book. The lead story alerts readers to search not only for victors but also for the company of the vanquished.

In *The Sun Also Rises*, bullfighting involved valor (and death) in the bright sun of a Spanish afternoon. In “The Undefeated,” the bullfighting (and the majority of the narrative) takes place at night. Darkness also pervades the final story of *Men Without Women*, “Now I Lay Me.”

*The Sun Also Rises* led many readers to a fascination with the culture of the bullfight. “The Undefeated” gave Hemingway opportunity to instruct readers in a more detailed way on the intricacies of the bullfight and the dynamics of the bullfighting world. He had begun that instruction in a report for the *Toronto Star Weekly* published on 20 October 1923 as “Bullfighting a Tragedy” (*Dateline* 340–46). He followed it more ambitiously in the interchapters of *In Our Time*. Those short pieces, chapters 9–14, anticipate the fuller treatment in “The Undefeated” of such motifs as the crowd’s behavior, thrown cushions, death from goring, and the cutting off of the pigtail. The reader of *Men Without Women* who has also read *In Our Time* will have added pleasure.

“The Undefeated” is among Hemingway’s longest short stories and might even be considered a companion piece to “Big Two-Hearted River,” the longest piece of *In Our Time*, as well as its concluding story, which thus prepares the reader for numerous linkages to *Men Without Women*. The two stories have common subjects and themes. Both depend on age-old traditions and rituals (fishing in “Big Two-Hearted River” and the bullfight in “The Undefeated”). Both stories emphasize
craft, knowing what to do and how to do it. In both stories the central act involves coping with violence (past and present) to define the protagonist’s personal worth. Both stories protest that man is not made for defeat. Both stories exclude female presence or influence.

183:1–4 Manuel Garcia . . . through the door. The opening sentence of the story not only places the story in Spain, giving first and last names to two Spaniards, but also dissuades the reader from expectations of an autobiographical story. Readers had, of course, been tempted to view Jake Barnes of The Sun Also Rises as an embodiment of the author; from publication, the novel was viewed as a roman à clef. Several stories from In Our Time had close links to Hemingway’s life, and these linkages interested readers. And though several stories in Men Without Women would also cause readers to think of Hemingway the person, the lead story does not.

Named first, Manuel Garcia dominates the story, first to last. Not many of the first readers of Men Without Women would have been aware of the historical reference of the name. But five years later, in Death in the Afternoon, Hemingway would write at length about this matador: “He had a complete knowledge of the bulls and a valor that was so absolute and such a solid part of him that it made everything easy that he understood; and he understood it all. Also he was very proud. He was the proudest man I have ever seen” (78). “The Undefeated” echoes much of Garcia’s story. Hemingway had used other aspects of Garcia’s career in chapters 13 and 14 of In Our Time. There he is called Maera, as the historical Manuel Garcia was known. As the first words of the story, the full name accents Hemingway’s fascination with this matador. “Maera” derives from madera (wood), the essential core.

Following her study of the manuscript versions of Death in the Afternoon, Susan F. Beegel makes a strong case that the Manuel of “The Undefeated” may owe even more to Manuel Garcia, El Espartero, who was gored to death in Madrid in 1894 (see her essay “The Death of El Espartero”). Concurrent with the young Hemingway’s first corrida was born the instinct to explore its history.

The opening paragraph creates a special aura about the fictional embodiment. Emmanuel—“God with us”—is the name given by Isaiah (7.14) for the messiah. The verb climbed suggests a strenuous effort, as if Manuel has struggled up to some Golgotha. At this point, the reader does not know what is in the suitcase Manuel puts down, but it suggests a heavy burden. And Manuel is given special insight here: he feels that someone is in the room, though no one has answered his knock. The image here suggests Holman Hunt’s painting The Light of the World. Hemingway was very familiar with that work from his childhood: his mother had presented a copy of it to her church as a memorial to her father. In 1933 Hemingway evoked the painting once again in his story with the same title as the painting.

The name Miguel Retana carries no similar fame in the history of bullfighting. Hemingway accents an important difference between the two men by placing “Don”
before the second name. The title for a gentleman, the designation here carries a gentle barb. Retana represents the dark commercial side of bullfighting. In For Whom the Bell Tolls, Hemingway places a Retana in chapter 14, where Pilar describes her life with the matador Finito. During an evening of festivities, the former manager of the matador Rafael el Gallo recounts a story of Rafael’s perfidy. An unidentified Retana is a listener at the table; Pilar assumes knowledge of the man whose interest has been piqued. Hemingway likely wishes the name to evoke memories of “The Undefeated” and a person who is cognizant of the machinations of the profession.

183:5–12 “Retana” . . . Manuel said. The first line of the story implies command. Its repetition adds to the sense of urgency as Manuel now bangs at the door. Retana, having heard that Manuel has been released from the hospital, knows who is outside the door. Retana’s “Who’s there?” poses a question he need not have asked. Manuel’s voice is one Retana knows well; Manuel has answered Retana with the informal “Manolo.” Retana knows as well the answer to his next question: he knows why Manuel has come. Manuel’s simple answer makes primary in the collection a cri de coeur that pervades much of Hemingway’s writing as well as a final agony of his own life.

183:13–17 the door clicked . . . bull-fight posters. Presumably Retana, without rising, has unlocked an electrically controlled door; there is no indication of another presence. When Manuel enters the room, Retana is already behind his desk at the far side of the room. The body language reveals Retana’s determination not to let any but business concerns prevail. There is no bodily contact. In every sense, Retana seems a “little man.” He borrows power from the stuffed bull’s head that is directly behind him. The bull’s head dominates the wall of photographs and posters. The bull personifies the threat of death that is basic to the human condition. Because the taxidermist is from Madrid, we may assume that we are in the Spanish capital, where audiences in the ring were especially demanding.

183:18–21 little man sat looking . . . the desk. Narrative repetition underscores the degradation of this exchange for Manuel. Retana uses silence and his gaze to discomfit Manuel as much as possible. When he breaks the silence, his declaration sets the value of Manuel’s life very low: “I thought they’d killed you.” For him, Manuel would be a statistic. His photograph is not mounted on Retana’s wall. Identifying a character by a trait is a favorite narrative device of Stephen Crane, useful for creating an aura of a harsh naturalistic world, as in “The Blue Hotel.” The reader knows Retana’s name. Bypassing it for “the little man,” Hemingway gains a heightened sense of the harsh commercial world, at the same time demeaning Retana’s lack of moral fiber. Knocking on wood, Manuel acknowledges the role of luck in his fate—a concept with accompanying rituals in most sports and one that would become an increasingly
insistent motif in Hemingway’s work: that Frederic Henry loses his St. Anthony’s medal in *A Farewell to Arms* is ominous; early in *The Old Man and the Sea*, Santiago says to Manolin, “If you were my boy I’d take you out and gamble. . . . But you are your father’s and your mother’s and you are in a lucky boat” (13).

183:22–27 “How many corridas” . . . looked at Manuel. The clipped dialogue furthers the sense that this is a conversation no one enjoys having; exchange of information is minimal, factual. *Corrida* is short for *corrida de toros*. When Manuel answers that he has had only one bullfight, the “little man” never seemed smaller. Sometimes “one” is enough. (As a “great banderillero” with Belmonte, Manuel Garcia fought ninety to a hundred times in a season; see Hemingway, *Death* 77). In another kind of arena, the obtuse might ask a soldier if he had been in only one battle. It all depends on the battle, on the bullfight. Retana had read about the “one” Manuel had been in—one that came near to costing Manuel his life. His continued gaze seems less in amazement at Manuel’s survival than for interest in any further use he might have for Manuel. Bullfighting always carries the threat of serious injury or even death, and no matador can expect to retire without a trip to the infirmary.

183:28–184:8 Manuel looked up . . . stuffed bull’s head. Retana’s gaze is countered by Manuel’s looking at the stuffed bull’s head. Not only has Manuel seen this bull many times before; this bull has haunted his thoughts: nine years ago the bull killed his brother. Although Manuel cannot read the brass plate, the narrator permits the reader to do so. The bull’s name, Mariposa, means “butterfly,” an ironic name for so fierce a beast. The bullfighting public of Madrid would recognize the name as “a series of passes with cape” over the matador’s shoulders. The matador faces the bull, “zig-zagging slowly backwards, drawing the bull on with a wave of first one side of the cape, then the other.” The series requires great knowledge of bulls in order to be executed properly. Doubtless, the bull Mariposa had earlier been identified as a brave one. He had “accepted” nine varas (lances) for seven caballos (horses)—the language of the inscription suggesting a transaction, one that resulted in the death of the bull as well as of the apprentice bullfighter (*novillero*). Antonio Garcia died on 27 April 1909. This date places present time at 1918—pairing the ritualistic killing in the arena with the horror of the Great War. What Hemingway hints at here, he makes explicit in *Death in the Afternoon*: “The only place where you could see life and death, *i.e.*, violent death now that the wars were over, was in the bull ring” (2). It is the narrator who shares the inscription. Manuel “could not read it”—perhaps because the distance from his side of the desk is too great, but the line may indicate that his knowledge of the written word is minimal. Manuel’s judgment is wrong: the purpose of the inscription is not in memory of his brother but in memory of the bull.
The lot . . . your cap.” Manuel’s study of Mariposa leads Retana to soften his stance, granting that Mariposa was a worthy opponent, unlike the sorry bulls that the Duke of Veragua has just sent him. The great matador requires a brave and strong bull. In Death in the Afternoon, Hemingway reflects at length on the crucial role of the ganadería (the bull ranch) in the enterprise.

Retana has finally become interested in talking with Manuel, as is reflected in his “leaning back” and inviting Manuel to sit down and remove his cap. The invitation has come tardily.

Manuel sat . . . watched him smoking. Cap removed, Retana can better view the matador. The “one” corrida of the past year has “changed” Manuel’s face. Retana notes that Manuel doesn’t “look well,” but the narrator sees more. Retana notes that Manuel’s coleta (his pigtail—the mark of the matador) is pinned forward on his head so as not to show under the cap. Manuel the matador seeks another fight so that he might sport that coleta less strangely. But from the narrator’s perspective, the strange look of Manuel marks him for death—as many years later in A Moveable Feast Hemingway would describe the poet Ernest Walsh as a man “marked for death” (123).

Manuel clarifies that he is just out of the hospital. How serious his wound has been is emphasized not only by his paleness but also by the rumor Retana has heard about the loss of a leg. The leg is the usual spot for wounds in bullfighting; the wound also links Manuel with Nick Adams, who in In Our Time in “The Battler” has been tossed from a boxcar and lands on his knee and who in “Cross-Country Snow” cannot do a telemark while skiing. In Men Without Women in “In Another Country,” we learn unmistakably that Nick had been hit in battle on the Italian front of the Great War. The sympathy for Manuel that Retana has held at bay surfaces with his deeper look at the now capless bullfighter. Although he offers Manuel a cigarette, he does not join him in the ritual. (In “Big Two-Hearted River,” the last story of In Our Time, Nick Adams smokes a cigarette as he recovers from the shock of seeing the burned country near Seney, Michigan.) Watching Manuel smoke, Retana begins to chart his own plan. Tellingly, he has remained on his side of the desk.

“Why don’t you” . . . “Tomorrow night.” Before making his own offer, Retana suggests the alternative that Manuel “get a job” and “go to work.” Retana has been dealing with matadors for many years, and he knows that the practical advice will not be heeded. Manuel defines himself by his profession: to work is to be a bullfighter. Though Manuel may laugh at Retana’s glib response, “Yes, while you’re in there,” he disregards the warning in the response. Just released from the hospital as he is, his visit to Retana carries a good deal of hubris. Nevertheless, wounded bullfighters were usually eager to return to the arena. Manuel is not unusual.
Sphinx-like, Retana continues to study Manuel before offering to put him in a nocturnal. There is no balancing pause from Manuel—and he quickly asks, “When?” That Retana can promise the following night suggests a callousness to match Manuel’s hubris.

184:40–185:10 “I don’t like” . . . “or leave it,” Retana said. Having set aside medical wisdom that would mandate against returning to the ring immediately following his release from the hospital, Manuel pauses over the superstitious (or supra-rational) consideration: substituting brings bad luck. The rational mind would question Manuel’s cause-effect assumptions. Salvador may not have been in good condition for the fight; possibly he was past his prime. Arguing for a fight in a week (when he presumably would feel stronger), Manuel appears to wish to convince himself as much as Retana: “I’ve got a lot of stuff.” Retana turns to the practical concerns of managing his business, but his statements emphasize the importance of audience to the bullfight. It matters only if the audience is present—unlike Nick’s fishing in “Big Two-Hearted River.” Like the heroes of ancient epics and sagas, the bullfighter puts his life at risk for a people. “The Undefeated” gives a great deal of attention to the worth of the audience but never minimizes its importance. For Retana, it’s all about money. Manuel would not draw, though in an earlier time he would have: “They don’t know who you are any more.” Manuel touts the youth of the current favorites: Litri, Rubito (The Blond One), and La Torre (The Tower), all “kids.” In the nocturnal, Manuel will work with “young” Hernandez and face two novillos (underaged or overaged bulls). These are names of current bullfighters. Since time present in the story is 1918, Hemingway can quietly parallel their forays into their craft in the very period when he was making his own. Manuel’s assignment with the young makes clear his standing in his profession—and his desperation. In Death in the Afternoon, Hemingway explains: “Novillada is a bullfight in which bulls which are under aged, or over aged, for a formal bullfight, that is, under four years and over five, or defective in vision or horn, are fought by bullfighters who have either never taken or renounced the title of matador de toros” (426). The majority of the deaths in the bullring come in the novilladas. The assignment will come late in the schedule—following the “Charlots,” the Charlie Chaplin comic routines. When Manuel inquires whose novillos he will face, Retana makes clear that the stock will be inferior; the question helps define the nature of the novillada. Manuel knows well their makeup, but he again sets aside the rational and repeats his conviction that substituting brings bad luck. He makes the ploy in the fading hope that Retana will give him a better assignment.

185:11–29 He leaned forward . . . in his pocket. Retana’s body language leaves no doubt that Manuel has but one possibility for a fight. Retana is not desperate to get Manuel. He wants to make a saving by replacing Larita, but he knows he can get
others cheaply too. He tells himself, realizing how weak Manuel is, that he would like to help him. He would better “help” Manuel by refusing to give him a fight until he is stronger. The negotiation over the amount that Manuel will be paid qualifies considerably the amount of compassion Retana feels for “Manolo,” the familiar form of the name he uses to his own advantage in the negotiation. The negotiation exemplifies Hemingway’s statement in *Death in the Afternoon* about finances and the present-day *novillada*, which came about “through the desire to present a regular bullfight at less than formal prices due to the bulls being bargains and the men, due to a desire to present themselves and make a name, or to the fact that they have failed as formal matadors, are less exigent in their demands for money than the full matadors” (426–27). The fifty pesetas that Retana advances Manuel is all that Manuel’s participation ends up costing him. The bullfight represented many things to Hemingway—a heightened test of manhood; confrontation of one’s mortality; art of the highest order, comparable to tragedy—but he emphasized that the bullfight is also a business.

185:30–186:16 “What about” . . . until it clicked. Salary settled, Manuel inquires about the support team—the cuadrilla made up of bullfighters, picadors (who on their horses stab the bull, weakening it but also enraging it), and banderilleros (bullfighters who help run the bull with the cape and place the decorated barbed darts into the bull’s neck or shoulder muscles). These are matters Manuel more reasonably would have addressed before agreeing on that salary. Manuel knows well what the “boys” who work nights for Retana are like—and Retana refuses to fund the “one good pic” that Manuel insists that he needs. (Hemingway has shortened *picador*, giving it a more informal flavor; *pic* is not a term that a Spaniard would say or write. But for an English-speaking audience, Hemingway has good precedent on his side. Chaucer’s monk in *The Canterbury Tales* is a “prikasour,” a hunter on horseback: “Of prikyng [pricking or spurring a horse] and of hunting for the hare / Was all his lust” (lines 190–91, General Prologue). “The Undefeated” uses *pic* as a verb as well as a noun. In *Death in the Afternoon*, Hemingway calls the ill-paid picador “the roughest and most constantly exposed to danger of death” of civil professions (436). To have any chance of success, Manuel realizes that he needs a good picador. Retana’s desire to “help” Manuel has completely dissipated; Manuel will have to settle for Retana’s team or fund that one picador who will give him “an even break.” As Manuel makes his exit, Retana stays behind his desk. His last words bespeak the harsh realities of Manuel’s situation: “Shut the door.” When Manuel does so, and the door clicks, his fate is sealed.

186:17–23 He went down . . . into a café. Manuel’s descent into the bright afternoon sun contrasts with the darkness of Retana’s office. But the brightness is “hot” and threatening. He walks toward the Puerta del Sol, the Gate of the Sun, a landmark
in the middle of Madrid and Spain. In *Death and the Sun*, Edward Lewine writes: “Madrid may be a young city with little indigenous culture in comparison to a place like Sevilla, but all of Spain is in Madrid, in its museums, its churches, its royal places, in its restaurants, and even in its people. A grand mix of immigrants from across the country” (124). Although the Puerta is walking distance from the ring, it is not a short walk (signaled in the story by the many people he passes and the intersecting streets that interrupt the available shade). Manuel is carrying a suitcase. Probably he walked from the hospital to the ring. This man needs rest.

Certainly, no one met him upon his release, and he sees no one he knows on this walk. Manuel is not only without a woman; he is very much alone. But he has a destination, a café, one he knows.

186:24–35 quiet in the café . . . Manuel said. The quietness of the café suits Manuel’s need; he seeks its quietest place in a small room at the back. That none of the men in the café speak to Manuel would confirm Retana’s judgment about his appeal on the program. The waiter recognizes Manuel but is unimpressed by his appearance following an absence of some length. He remembers, however, what Manuel desires—“a shot of the ordinary” with his coffee and milk—and he is quite willing to share what he knows about Zurito’s whereabouts. It is significant that Manuel asks about Zurito before he places his order. Time is short for him to find his “one good pic.” Hemingway models his fictional picador on the splendid matador Antonio de la Haba, called Zurito, and on Antonio’s father and brother. “Zurito was the son of the last and one of the greatest of the old-time picadors” (*Death* 254). Old Zurito brought up the other son to be a picador, one who “has a perfect style, great courage, is a splendid horseman and would be the best picador in Spain but for one thing. He is too light to be able to punish the bulls” (*Death* 258). Old Zurito’s family is not lucky, but Hemingway admires it greatly, as is reflected by the extended treatment he gives it in *Death in the Afternoon*.

186:36–187:38 waiter came back . . . not interested in him. When the waiter returns, he is accompanied by a coffee boy, a waiter in training. The boy says nothing while serving Manuel, but his presence is useful for the youth-age drama so important to the story. His apprenticeship in a café frequented by bullfighters accents the cultural importance of bullfighting in Spain. (In “The Capital of the World,” a story first published in 1936, Hemingway made such boys central.) The boy is struck by Manuel’s pale face. Winking at the boy as they note Manuel’s pigtail, the waiter reveals his estimation of the failed bullfighter and then somewhat callously asks if Manuel will be fighting in the Charlie Chaplins (comic preludes not to be taken seriously), an assumption that embarrasses the boy. The waiter here is not the ideal of his profession. Manuel lets the implication pass as he tersely responds that he is in the “ordinary.”
brandy that the careless waiter had “slopped over” into his saucer, a toast of sorts to bullfighters. As Manuel orders his third drink, he accents his disgust at the waiters, who ignore him while they make fun of other matadors of merit. The concentration of threes is pronounced: three waiters, three named matadors, three brandies.

188:3–10 **still asleep . . . went to sleep.** Brandy and sleep are boons to Manuel. Surely he needs the sleep, not, as he realizes, more of the hot afternoon sun. Wise to the ways of the world, he first secures his suitcase. His need for a good picador remains paramount in his thinking: he will wait for Zurito where he is.

188:11–17 **When he awoke . . . black Cordoba hat.** This paragraph contrasts with the opening scene of the story. Manuel is again across a table from someone, but the table does not impose the separation that the “big desk” represents. In place of the “little” Retana is a “big” man—Zurito, his heavy brown face like that of an Indian marks him as a man of the earth, not a tomb-like office. Waving the waiter away, Zurito shows a compassion for Manuel that no person in the story has yet shown him. Zurito is willing to wait for Manuel. In reading his papers, Retana had indicated that he wished Manuel gone; Zurito reads with different purpose—passing time while Manuel sleeps. The boon of good sleep he does not take lightly. That Zurito moves his lips as he reads further marks him as a man of the earth. His hat marks his origins in Cordoba, in southern Spain. The historical Zurito is from Cordoba: “dark and rather thin; his face was sad in repose; serious and with a deep sense of honor” (*Death* 254).

188:18–29 **Manuel sat up . . . folding the paper.** For the first time, the language of friendship enters the narrative. In addition to personal greeting, there is gentle humor when Manuel says he has been sleeping. There is honesty: Manuel admits things are not going well with him, as Zurito can clearly see in Manuel’s “white face.” Putting away his paper, Zurito lets us know that the bullfighter will receive his full attention. (Retana reads his papers when he wishes to dismiss Manuel.)

188:30–36 **“I got a favor” . . . two men at the table.** That Manuel has a better relationship with Zurito than he has with Retana is clear. He addresses Zurito with a nickname, Manos, short for *manosduros* (strong hands), the extended nickname. Those skilled hands are precisely what Manuel needs, as Zurito instinctively knows as he puts his hands on the table. Whereas the nonsmoking Retana offered Manuel a cigarette, Zurito suggests the communion of a drink together. The waiter who serves them senses the strength of their friendship.

188:37–189:6 **“What’s the matter” . . . “any right to ask you.”** Manuel requests that Zurito pic two bulls for him, the preparatory task for any bullfighter entering the