

**CONSTRUCTING NEW MASCULINITIES:
THE REPRESENTATION OF MASCULINITY
IN U.S. LITERATURE AND CINEMA
(1980-2003)**

RESEARCH PROJECT SUMMARY

Ministerio de Trabajo y Asuntos Sociales, Instituto de la Mujer
EXP. 62/03

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A Theoretical Introduction

1.1 Origins and Development of Masculinity Studies

Masculinity studies emerged in the United States as a result of the feminist and gay liberation movements of the 60s and 70s. These movements, which had been inspired by the liberating language of the Civil Rights Movement, struggled in order to provide visibility to women and homosexuals. This affirmative action process, indirectly, implied questioning the hegemony of the heterosexual male. Consequently, in Western societies the patriarchal system, based on the dominance of the heterosexual man, and whose ideology has been passed on by discourses such as philosophy, literature, architecture, cinema, history, medicine, politics, mass media, etc., was called into question by the social movements of the 60s. Patriarchal values, once considered to be universal, were subject to revision (Carabí).

The first of these social movements, feminism, helped women to rethink themselves. From this perspective, feminism not only helped women to question traditional concepts of femininity, but also the sexual division per se. By demanding political and social changes, women were questioning patriarchal precepts, and this would finally lead to the development of a critique of the hegemonic rules of gender. Similarly, the birth of the gay movement in 1969 led to the questioning of heterosexual normativity. Having been discriminated against for a long time, gay men and lesbians united to fight for their cause, claiming the freedom to choose one's sexual orientation as an inalienable right. Gay people demonstrated spontaneously at Stone Wall to defend the freedom of sexual choice and with their act invalidated the exclusiveness of the heterosexual, normative model. Together with feminism, the gay movement was thus preparing the way for the emergence and the development of analyses of hegemonic/heterosexual masculinity.

As well as these two fundamental social movements, current interest in men and masculinities derives from the Civil Rights Movement, which began to build up in the United States during the late 50s and became tremendously active in the following decade both in America and in other countries. Participants in the movement condemned racism and demanded racial equality between blacks and whites. As a number of scholars have argued (Thomas DiPiero), masculinity and whiteness are not only interdependent, they are constructed in such a manner that each category becomes

more complex as the result of its association with the other. By defending non-whiteness, the Civil Rights Movement was, therefore, also paving the way for a critique of white, hegemonic masculinity.

Besides these social origins, the contemporary interest in masculinity also has academic roots (Harry Brod). Since the late 60s and early 70s, women's studies in the United States have been revising traditional academic curricula, integrating the study of gender into the majority of colleges and universities. Consequently, women's studies have created most of the vocabulary for academic discussions dealing with inequality and the construction of gender—that is, the cultural constructions of femininity as well as that of masculinity. Masculinity studies, drawing on feminist theory, emphasize and expand the analysis of masculinity within gender studies.

Masculinity studies in the United States are also related to gay/lesbian/queer studies, as far as methodology and content are concerned (Brod). Similarly, gay studies have also influenced women's studies by providing them with the tools for questioning the nature of the heterosexual/homosexual binary. Consequently, it is gradually more difficult to distinguish between gay and masculinity studies in the United States. In fact, both share common interests, such as the general effects of homophobia. Moreover, gay studies have proved to be very useful, as Harry Brod has pointed out, in correcting the unfortunate tendency within masculinity studies in the United States to presume too much commonality among men.

Most of the recent research on masculinities is incorporating issues of race into the analysis of gender. By interrelating masculinity studies and ethnic studies, scholars such as Michael Awkward, Robyn Wiegman, David Eng, Alfredo Mirandé and Mrinalini Sinha, among others, have argued that masculinity is influenced by ethnicity in very important ways. From this perspective, the theory of masculinities also derives from critical ethnic studies, which emerged in the United States during the 70s and have proved how race is an essential component in our social and political lives.

Although, particularly in the United States, masculinity studies are the result of the intersection between feminist, gay and ethnic studies—all of which at least have a history of three decades—masculinity studies constitute—especially in comparison to other, more established academic fields, such as women's studies—a more recent incorporation within the academia (Brod). Although some of the most liberal American institutions, such as the University of California, Berkeley, began to offer courses on

masculinities in the mid 70s, the fact is that masculinity studies did not emerge as an academic field until the 90s. Since then, these studies have contributed to the development of a critical theory that is pro-feminist, pro-gay, and which is devoted to the improvement of women's and men's lives (Judith Newton).

Consequently, since the early 90s, the study of masculinity has gradually become the focus of attention in magazines, TV programs and university courses. In the United States, a number of former women's studies departments (at the University of Indiana, Rutgers or UCLA, for example), have been re-named, during the last decade, gender studies departments for having included gay studies, as well as masculinity studies, in their curricula. Many departments of sociology, psychology, anthropology, history, philosophy, English, etc., have also begun to incorporate the analysis of masculinity into their courses and programs. Therefore, the issue of masculinity is not and should not be limited to gender studies departments, since it is increasingly becoming the focus of an interdepartmental and interdisciplinary study.

Multidisciplinary Studies of Masculinity

Historically, the analysis of masculinity has, therefore, constituted an interdisciplinary field of study, inspired by theoretical contributions from diverse academic disciplines, especially from biology, anthropology, psychology and sociology. As a result, the research project which we have developed during the last three years has also been based on an interdisciplinary viewpoint, while, simultaneously, trying to maintain a critical attitude towards the different contributions offered by these various disciplines. Although all the disciplines have helped us to understand better the meaning and construction of the male gender, each one of them, on their own, as Michael Kimmel and Michael Messner have pointed out, cannot fully explain how masculinities function in our societies. In biology, for example, genetic reductionism, which directly links different gender behaviors to genetic factors, has been questioned since the 90s by recent genetic theory in the United States. These theories completely reject traditional assumptions according to which genes absolutely determine human behavior and its complexities. As Lynne Segal argues in the book *Debating Masculinity (La masculinidad a debate*, Carabí and Armengol, 2007), genetics cannot explain everything, even less the complex characteristics of human behavior socially and historically constructed, such as sexual desire and violence. We are born male or

female, but we always become men and women in a specific historical and socio-cultural context. Biological differences between men and women seem to have their influence on social differences, but they do not determine directly our behavior as men and women (Kimmel and Messner).

Although some anthropological studies, such as Margaret Mead's *Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies* (1935), have shown the variety of gender roles in different cultures, thus underlining the fluidity of gender and the supremacy of cultural organization, many American anthropological works, like *Manhood in the Making* (1990) by David Gilmore, insist upon the universality of gender differences as a result of cultural adaptations to the environment. Such arguments reveal a clear conservative discourse by upholding that differences between men and women are determined by nature and cultural evolution and that, consequently, these should not be questioned (Kimmel and Messner).

Despite the fact that psychological models have made essential contributions to masculinity studies in the United States by explaining the numerous internal conflicts and fragile sexual identities that conform masculine psyches, the power and meanings of masculinity derive not only from the mind and family interactions, but also from broader social and political gender relations. As Lynne Segal has explained, it is the difficulty to overcome the dominant individualistic methodology within psychological thought (that is, the difficulty to overcome the idea that all explanations of personal and social phenomena can be reduced to facts about individuals) that makes it so difficult to understand why changes experienced by men are so slow and contradictory.

Similarly, psychological studies on gender in the United States have described sequences of development specifically for men and women, although such models have also been questioned by American feminist psychoanalysts such as Nancy Chodorow and Carol Gilligan. These scholars have proved, for example, how certain patriarchal ideologies make masculinity the standard and the norm against which to measure the psychological development of both men and women. Inevitably, thus, femininity becomes problematic and less developed. Chodorow, for example, insists upon the fact that "essential" differences between the sexes are socially constructed and, consequently, subject to be criticised and changed.

Despite the above contributions, which are vital to masculinity studies, many sociological models are still based on the "theory of sexual roles." Some sociologists

continue to talk about "sexual roles,"—that is, the body of attitudes, attributes and behaviors considered to be appropriate for men or women (Kimmel and Messner). Therefore, masculinity is frequently related to technological competence, aggression, competitiveness, etc., while femininity is related to emotional empathy, sociability and passivity. The American theory of social roles was the basis for a great variety of self-help handbooks which taught parents how to bring up their children if they wanted them to become healthy men and women. However, various feminists scholars have also begun to question the theory of sexual roles, showing how ideological presumptions on maturity and health made masculinity the norm against which to measure/value both sexes (Kimmel and Messner).

It seems clear, then, that the studies of masculinity could gain a lot from an interdisciplinary methodology which would analyze various issues from different perspectives (some of them, even contradictory) maintaining, therefore, a critical focus upon each one of them. By using an interdisciplinary methodology, the research project *Constructing New Masculinities* has, consequently, concentrated upon the most recent contributions to masculinity studies from fields such as sociology, psychology and psychoanalysis, anthropology and biology, in order to carry out an analysis from different theoretical perspectives. Such an interdisciplinary focus has allowed us to maintain a critical stance in relation to the various models that explain and analyze masculinity from different academic disciplines. While a great number of research projects deal with masculinities within a specific discipline, our project is characterized by the novelty of an interdisciplinary analysis.

The original contribution of our work is to include literature in our study. In fact, during the last decade, a great number of works have been published on the study of representations of manhood, particularly in the United States. This increasing interest in the analysis of the imagery of male gender in literature, film, advertising, mass media, etc. could bring about important social gains, bearing in mind that such cultural representations help to understand better masculinity's social construction. In fact, many feminist theorists have demonstrated how "gender is (a) representation" and how "the representation of gender *is* its construction" (Teresa De Lauretis). We can conclude, therefore, that studies on cultural representations of (the male) gender can be particularly relevant to the analysis of the social construction of masculinity. From this perspective, masculinity theorist Michael Kimmel has stated that while the first studies

on masculinities—published in the United States during the 70s and 80s—emerged within the fields of psychology and sociology, since the 90s more emphasis is being placed on their literary and cultural representations (*Debating Masculinity*: 2005, Carabí and Armengol).

The research project *Constructing New Masculinities* has thus delved into the new field of study of literary representations of manhood. Besides exploring the genealogy and development of these studies in the United States, our research has focused on exploring the practical applications of masculinity studies to American literary criticism. During the last three years we have noted that these studies could contribute to an interesting re-reading and revision of American letters. On the one hand, masculinity studies help to question the traditional, patriarchal images of manhood in American literature. On the other, they stimulate the search for new models of masculinity within that literature which are less sexist, racist and homophobic. Such alternative masculinity models are frequently expressed in the literature written by female American writers. These writers not only question masculine, patriarchal values like individualism and competitiveness; they also "dream" about new literary models of manhood, about attractive "fictional" men who are more sensitive and less competitive, less individualistic and more relational. The research project *Constructing New Masculinities*, therefore, has paid particular attention to masculine models in contemporary American literature written by women. Their novels invite us to think about the need—and the possibility—of men undergoing a social change, as well as that of traditional gender relations.

Studies of Masculinities in the Literature of the United States: Origins and Development

One of the first and main critical works on masculinities in American literature was *Manhood and the American Renaissance* (1989), by David Leverenz. Drawing on various theoretical and critical discourses such as feminism, new historicism, psychoanalysis (and, up to a certain extent, deconstruction), Leverenz analyzes the representations of masculinity in the literature of five American canonical authors who wrote in the 1850s: Emerson, Hawthorne, Melville, Thoreau and Whitman. According to Leverenz, these writers consciously felt that they did not fit within the dominant masculinity norms of their time. Most of them felt that they were feminized by their

artistic "sensitivity" and their literary vocation, considered as "domestic" and separated from the public sphere. Moreover, Leverenz outlines three ideologies of masculinity which predominated in New England before the outbreak of the Civil War: patrician, artisan and entrepreneurial manhood. He suggests that in ante-bellum America the most traditional ideologies of the patrician patriarch and the independent artisan were questioned by the new ideology of the emerging middle class, that of individual competitiveness. Leverenz, therefore, establishes interesting links between conflicts of gender and class, especially the fundamental class conflict that took place in New England from 1820 to 1850: the fight over power between the old elite of landowners and the new middle class of entrepreneurial business men. He concludes by stating that the middle-class won the battle, and that its ideology of masculinity, related to competitive individualism, still dominates present-day America (1989, p. 3). Another aspect of Leverenz's work is the attention he devotes to the representations of masculinity in the literature written by nineteenth century American women writers such as Caroline Kirkland, Sarah Hale, Susan Warner and Harriet Beecher Stowe, who, as he argues, throw light upon class and gender conflicts in American society with great clarity, even starkness (p. 4). Finally, Leverenz's analysis of texts such as Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1851-52) adds race issues to those of class as analytical categories, establishing various interesting links between the three concepts. However, *Manhood and the American Renaissance* is also somewhat problematic, especially in relation to issues of homophobia. In his work Leverenz establishes explicitly an association between homosexuality, masochist passivity and humiliation (Rodrigo Andrés). Based upon the fear and hatred of homosexuality, Leverenz's critical work ends up promoting traditional ideas and stereotypes about homosexuality and, consequently, becomes a somewhat outdated and alienating study for the majority of contemporary readers, as Rodrigo Andrés has pointed out.

Although Leverenz's work is generally considered as a foundational study of masculinities in literature, contemporary research is providing new and interesting perspectives, most of which are ideologically more progressive. It is impossible to list all of them here. However, we will highlight a few of those works which have been described as particularly relevant and innovating (Murphy, *Fictions of Masculinity*, 1994). For example, *Gender, Fantasy, and Realism in American Literature* (1982) by Alfred Habegger is an interesting study about the representations of manhood in the

novels of Henry James and William Dean Howells. *Phallic Critiques: Masculinity and Twentieth-Century Literature* (1984) by Peter Schwenger analyzes masculinity in the fiction of Mailer and Hemingway. In this work Schwenger also explores the interaction between sexuality and literary style, arguing that, in fact, there *is* a masculine style (1984, p. 12). Two relatively recent and important works are *Double Talk: The Erotics of Male Literary Collaboration* (1989) by Wayne Koestenbaum and *Engendering Men: The Question of Male Feminist Criticism* (1990) by Joseph A. Boone and Michael Cadden. The former deals with the literary collaboration between male authors. The latter, *Engendering Men*, according to its editors, points to "different possibilities" for a feminist practice by men (1990, p. 4). Boone and Cadden state that American men have already begun to redefine themselves as men and, consequently, as critics of literary and cultural texts that they have inherited, being now in the process of recreating them. "By sexing ourselves, by making visible our textual/sexual bodies", they argue, "we recognize our role in a movement [of feminist men] whose moment, we hope, has come" (Boone and Cadden, 1990, p. 7).

Most of these critical studies explore cultural and literary representations of *white* masculinity. However, we should bear in mind that in recent years a large number of works on non-white masculinities have appeared. It is therefore worthwhile to mention some of the most relevant and interesting publications on literary representations of African American (Awkward, 1989 and 1995), Asian American (Eng, 2001), Chicano (Mirande, 1997; Ozieblo, 2004), Jewish (Rosenberg, 2001) and Indian American masculinities (Sinha, 1995).

New Masculinities Written by Women

If we accept Frantz Fanon's theory (1952) according to which the oppressed have a privileged viewpoint over the mechanisms of oppression, then it is not surprising that women, largely oppressed by patriarchy, have been revising and rewriting masculinity from particularly revealing and innovating perspectives. Apart from questioning traditional patriarchal values, in their texts women writers frequently "dream" about new, alternative models of manhood. Consequently, the research project *Constructing New Masculinities* has paid special attention to masculinity models created by American women writers. The aims have been twofold: to explore the deconstruction of

masculinity and the creation of new, more egalitarian, enriching and plural ways of being a man in women's fiction.

Certainly, anthologies and literary criticisms have frequently ignored feminine perceptions of the virtues, dilemmas and struggles for happiness on the part of men. However, women in general, and American female writers in particular, have always talked about men. What has taken place, however, is that, in contrast to statements made by men about women, statements about men by women, in general terms (at least until the last decades), have been "more peaceful, more thoughtful, more speculative—and quite penetrating" (Daly). Despite this fact, or perhaps as a result of it, female views on masculinity have generally been relegated to a secondary role by literary criticism. Moreover, the few studies that have directly or indirectly analyzed the representation of manhood in American literature written by women have focused almost exclusively on their denunciation of the negative and patriarchal masculinity models based on sexism, racism and/or homophobia.

With the objective of inverting such critical tendencies, the research project *Constructing New Masculinities* during the last three years has aimed, on the one hand, to explore the models of manhood in American literature written by women and, on the other, to show the irreducible complexity and plurality of such models. Besides denouncing patriarchal masculinity, the project has intended to highlight the new, alternative models of manhood created by American female writers, thus showing "not only what many American women writers seem to appreciate in men, but also what they see as possible paths to happiness for their brothers" (Daly).

1.2 THEMES

1.2.1 MASCULINITY AND WARFARE - Cristina Alsina

As expressed by Michael Bibby in his 1996 essay "Hearts and Minds. Bodies, Poetry, and Resistance in the Vietnam Era", the body of the war veteran—and, in particular, the body that has been mutilated or disabled—functions as an effective metaphor for the social and political fragmentation of post-Vietnam America and hinders the process for re-establishing the hegemonic, ideological consensus. In the best of cases, war veterans endured frustration as a result of defeat in war and the incapability of fulfilling the rite of passage to achieve adult manhood, which supposedly they were to reach in the army. In the worst of cases, they endured physical and psychological wounds that made them unfit for a complete reinsertion as useful members of society. Consequently, a generation of men made their transition to adulthood with a strong feeling of extemporaneity; their bodies, which "no longer function[ed] as the potent sign of masculine soldiery offered by dominant ideology," had turned into "a contradictory, fractured, dis-membered sign revealing the incoherence of this ideology itself" (Bibby, 1996, p. 155). As a result, many analysts coincide with Milton Bates who stated the following in his 1996 book *The Wars We Took to Vietnam: Cultural Conflict and Storytelling*: "America [...] was castrated on the sexualized battlefield of Vietnam" (Bates, 1996, p. 143). As Linda Boose argues in her article "Techno-Muscularity and the 'Boy Eternal'. From The Quagmire to the Gulf", included in a collection of essays edited by Amy Kaplan and Donal E. Pease, *Cultures of United States Imperialism*, this historical situation—"the debacle of America's masculinized, militarized policies on both fronts of the Vietnam War" (Boose, 1996, 585)—could have resulted in "an alternative to the mythology of a national self born in and valorized by a history of conquest and domination" (1993, p. 585). However, during the 1980s, the traditional model of masculinity, enhanced by reactionary and revisionist institutional practices of the Reagan and Bush administrations, acquires more defensive attitudes and, as Susan Jeffords brilliantly argues in her 1989 book *The Remasculinization of America. Gender and the Vietnam War*, reinscribes itself as the hegemonic model within the U.S. cultural network.

The fiction on the Vietnam War written by female American writers introduces interesting aspects with respect to the one written by former combatants. This fiction has been the object of analysis by the critical works mentioned above, and its study is precisely our original contribution to the field of men's studies. Novelists like Bobbie Ann Mason—*In Country* (1985)—or Jayne Anne Phillips—*Machine Dreams* 1984—create male characters whose weakness is not considered as aberrant in relation to the traditional model of masculinity, but an opportunity for thinking about hegemonic notions of national identity and masculine subjectivity, generated by the weaknesses they describe. The novels by Mason and Phillips question hegemonic discourses that establish the standard of perfect masculinity in relation to which every male individual must negotiate his individual identity, sometimes at a high cost. Both writers establish empathetic links with their male characters and propose to revise hegemonic discourses in order to find new spaces for the creation of a male subjectivity that will give rise to a more egalitarian and dialoguing model and, consequently, not so costly for the male subject.

1.2.2 MASCULINITY AND ETHNICITY

Studies that link masculinity, race, and ethnicity form a field of analysis which has been consolidating itself as men's studies have been included in gender studies programs. Although the research on African American masculinities has produced a greater number of publications, these have been followed by the studies on Hispanic masculinities, Asian masculinities, Native American, and, most significantly, Arab American masculinities, to which greater attention has been given in recent years.

This field is a substantial part of our research given the fact that, as our societies are increasingly more multicultural, mostly because of immigration, racial issues become fundamental for determining the behaviour of men from different cultural backgrounds. In our work we deal with the study of ethnic masculinities, paying particular attention to the stereotypes created by Western culture, as well as to the new representations formulated by women writers from different cultures. Our analysis of multiculturalism and gender representations has as its basis and starting point the forthcoming publication of the volume *Multiculturalism and American Women Writers. Early Testimonies* (Carabí), which includes interviews carried out in the United States

to thirteen women writers from African American, Asian American (Chinese, Japanese, Filipino), Hispanic (Chicana, Cuban, Dominican), and Native American cultures.

1.2.2.1 African American Masculinities - Ángels Carabí

With regard to African American culture, the works of Frantz Fanon, Lynne Segal, James Baldwin, and Toni Morrison point out that, since the slave trade in the sixteenth century, the white man has had a colonizing attitude towards the black man, attributing him a subordinate masculinity whose function is to reaffirm white manhood. Colonization and slavery devalued the nature of the black man, dehumanizing him with the aim to equate him to material property, and he was turned into the scapegoat of the white man's fears and fantasies. Consequently, we could talk about a double imagery of the black man which has persisted in the imagination of white/Western culture: the feminized black man, "proved" to belong to a less humane race according to Darwinism, and the hypermasculine black male, whose sexual might is a threat for the white man. Baldwin, Fanon, and Segal argue that the hyper-masculinization of the black man is the result of projecting onto the uncontrollable black body the (repressed) impulses of the white man. This factor has led to the creation of the stereotype of the rapist black male which, in turn, justifies protecting the white woman by oppressing and torturing the black man.

Bearing in mind this reality created by racism, the works written by African American women that we have studied are characterized by the complex representations of African American masculinity. The black community is object of racist attitudes, but it is itself patriarchal and racist. According to Baldwin, the black man has assumed a relation of domination over the African American woman in order to mitigate the relationship of dependency produced by racist structures. As black women, the authors that we have analyzed denounce the oppression suffered by women of color in the hands of black men and, in this way, fight against androcentrism. Alice Walker's novels, among many other examples, reflect a clear dissatisfaction with black men. *The Color Purple*, which won the Pulitzer Prize, portrays the growing cruelty to black women on behalf of the father of the family, and shows only a little bit of hope for a new type of man toward the end of the novel. A few African American female authors, as Audre Lorde has indicated, have chosen another perspective: to believe that "we should [black men and women], surely, work together." Toni Morrison already made it clear, in an

interview she gave us, that "[African American] men have a lot more to learn from women." Morrison reflects such an idea in her novels, in which the male characters learn to be free when they leave behind the heavy patriarchal legacy according to which, in order to be manly, it is necessary to oppress another human being. What is interesting about Morrison is that she establishes a chain of relationships between women and men. A man is able to help a woman because he has been helped by another man who, in turn, has been taught by a woman. This line of thought coincides with Michael Awkward's who sees men as black women's potential allies in their efforts to destabilize patriarchy. For Awkward, this has to do with the fact that men should reach a balance between a personal search, as people marked by gender, and the application of the critiques against patriarchy. It is precisely through this process that feminist men can contribute to expand the influence of feminist criticism and explore other possibilities. Within this context of dialogues between African American men and women, we have analyzed the works of women writers such as the already mentioned Alice Walker and Toni Morrison, as well as those by Gloria Naylor, June Jordan and Maya Angelou. We have also analyzed the work produced during the 1930s by Zora Neale Hurston, for being a magnificent forerunner of the analysis of African American manhood developed by her female successors forty years later.

1.2.2.2 Asian American Masculinities - Isabel Seguro

Our study of Asian American masculinity has been focused mainly on the representation of Asia and Asian Americans in dramatic and theatrical texts. We have centered our analysis on the way Asian American artists and playwrights see themselves in contrast to the type of representations and constructions of the Oriental "Other" created by mainstream, white culture in the United States. We have also analyzed how these representations have affected the various Asian American communities, both in the public (for example, via discriminatory legislation) and in the private spheres (as a result of the influence of stereotypes on the psyche), and how the younger generations have deconstructed these images by providing alternative re/presentations. Consequently, we have given particular attention to the images of the feminized and emasculated Asian American man and to the diverse strategies used by some playwrights in order to deconstruct them as a means of criticizing U.S. mainstream culture and imperialism.

The analysis of the representations of Asian American masculinities has been focused on dramatic and theatrical texts from the 1980s to the present. This choice is based on theatre's imminently public nature, which exemplifies how Asian communities have gained social visibility, as well as in dominant U.S. culture. Theatre is also a genre which, in comparison to others, has not been the object of extensive analytical work within Asian American studies.

Initially, the literary criticism of Asian American texts used as the main tool for analysis has been the socio-historical context in which they were produced, emphasizing issues on race and ethnicity: cultural assimilation, racial discrimination and its material consequences, together with the psychological repercussions on the subject. The first studies of Asian American literature, consequently, focused on the positive assessment of cultural assimilation versus the resistance to dominant (white) discourses of American society. A clear example of such an approach is the acclaimed work by Elaine H. Kim *Asian American Literature: An Introduction to the Writings and Their Social Context* (1982). From this perspective, texts are considered positively if they show resistance to dominant American discourse, thus criticizing cultural assimilation, which traditionally has been associated with Asian immigration and Asian Americans. These first studies tended to concentrated upon literary genres such as poetry, short stories and fiction. The fact that in our research we deal with theatrical production is, by itself, an innovation that has also taken place recently in the United States.

The selected dramatic and theatrical texts are used to analyze, from new literary theoretical perspectives within Asian American studies, issues related to the construction and representation of the subject according to race and gender. As a result, in our analyses we have drawn on such fields as postcolonialism, gender, and queer studies, together with studies of diaspora due to the social impact of immigration. Although recently specific works on Asian American theatre have been published, these have not focused on the studies of masculinity nor on the interrelations and parallelisms between the various discourses that contribute to the formation of the subject. Thus, Josephine Lee's *Performing Asian America* (1997) basically focuses upon issues of race and ethnicity in Asian American plays. For her part, Karen Shimakawa in *National Abjection* (2002), draws on the concept of abjection, developed by Julia Kristeva, in order to demonstrate how Asian America has been constructed as the abject of the unmarked American subject. Certainly, David L. Eng's work *Racial Castration:*

Managing Masculinity in Asian America (2001) is a thorough analysis of images of Asian American masculinity in literature and film, but it only studies in depth one play, the Broadway hit *M. Butterfly* (1988) by David Henry Hwang. However, since then, Asian American theatre has been characterized by its great dynamism and productivity, and it is precisely this corpus that is most interesting to study in order to find out the changes in the representations of the Asian American subject from an Asian American perspective.

1.2.2.3 Native American Masculinities - Àngels Carabí

For years, images of the North American Indians have been transmitted mainly by the Hollywood film industry, and has formed our vision of the first inhabitants of the United States as savages, whose behavior was closer to the animal kingdom than to the realm of human beings. This degrading stereotype has been attributed to most [Native American] tribes—without differentiating between the diverse communities nor individual members—and its function has been to group together the fears and limitations of the subject with the gaze, as a means of demonstrating his/her superior position. Consequently, the more dehumanizing and cruel the indigenous people were depicted, the more noble and courageous the new invaders appeared to be. The demonization of the Native was thus used to justify colonization as a means of progress, according to which the presence of the savage indigenous was an obstacle to be eliminated (Coltelli).

In order to understand Native American literature and its representations of masculinity, it is necessary to approach the Native American concept of the universe. For Native Americans, the world is a cosmic unit where all things, people, animals, plants, spirits are interrelated. A very illustrative image of the Pueblo Indians that reflects this concept is that of the spider web. The knitting of the web is so sensitive that when one thread is broken, the whole structure is affected. Similarly, when the harmony of the tribe, of nature, or of an individual is altered or destabilized, the whole cosmic unit is also altered. Another fundamental Native American cultural concept is the identification with the land. The critic Paula Gun Allen establishes the difference between the Indian and the European via their different relation to the land. When Native Americans refer to the land, Allen points out that they state that "We are the land." There is no separation between people and the land since everything is

interrelated. On the contrary, Western thought is anthropocentric and man, especially the construction of traditional masculinity, establishes a relationship of separation and of control over the environment. Another significant aspect of Native American culture is the fact that its cultural legacy has been transmitted orally. The figure of the storyteller, who can be either a man or a woman, is the one in charge of keeping alive the tradition. Pueblo Indians represent the storyteller as the image of a sturdy woman, with her mouth wide open and surrounded by children listening the stories about the tribe. The interaction with the audience, a characteristic of oral transmission, allows legends, myths, and traditions to evolve with social changes.

The current situation of Native Americans is difficult. Although the population has increased since the beginning of the century and has almost reached two million people, the fact is that the average life expectancy is forty nine years of age. The deep feeling of loss as a result of having lost their language, their land, their rights, their culture and their deities has led the Native American Indian to feel an object and not a subject of his/her own history (Allen). The lack of working opportunities and racism has led young people and adults, in an alarming way, to search for refuge in alcohol. The suicide rate is high among the teenage and adult population as a result of the numerous personal and community conflicts, so that the American Indian sees how his/her culture and life are in constant danger.

Bearing in mind these circumstances, the Native American male, as much as the Native American female, are searching for a cultural identity that will reaffirm them as individuals. However, there are differences between them in the way of achieving their purpose. In the works that we have analyzed by Louise Erdrich, Joy Harjo, Leslie Silko, and Chris Eyre, the women, as Chavkin points out, usually work out their way by feeling strong and necessary for the community. The men, however, feel insecure and uncertain about the place they occupy since they are unable to carry out those activities that would provide them with respect (Wong). Women tend to be autonomous, capable of providing for themselves and their families, but most men have problems with taking care of themselves. The ways in which men usually affirm their identity is through violence against women, against themselves or against other men, as well as escape and leaving their children and family. Aware of such a reality, contemporary female writers create genuine male characters who, in some cases, and via healing narratives, recover the relational principle that characterized their culture, while simultaneously dealing

with themes such as male friendship, filial relationships, violence in the [Indian] reservation, and the relationship with Nature and the community.

1.2.2.4 Arab American Masculinities - Marta Bosch

The critical analysis of Arab American literature has begun to develop recently, basically through the publication of anthologies such as *Post Gibran: Anthology of New Arab American Writing* (2000) by Munir Akash and Khaled Mattawa, or *Dinarzad's Children: An Anthology of Contemporary Arab American Fiction* (2004) edited by Pauline Kaldas and Khaled Mattawa. Arab American literature started developing at the beginning of the twentieth century, when immigrant men of Arab origin in the United States began to write poetry and novels, mostly within what came to be known as the Pen League, founded by the writer Khalil Gibran. This group disappeared in the decade of the 40s, at a time when there was a decrease in the production of Arab American literature. However, during the 1980s there was a re-emergence which mostly concentrated upon female voices who, firstly through poetry, followed by fiction, offered new visions of the Arab American experience. It is for this reason that the study of contemporary Arab American narrative is still incipient and that there are no critical analyses, from a gender perspective, that examine masculinity from the point of view of Arab American female writers.

There do exist studies on Arab masculinity, such as *Gender and Difference in the Middle Ages* (2003) by Sharon Farmer and Carol Braun Pasternack, and *Imagined Masculinities: Male Identities and Culture in the Modern Middle East* (2000) by Mai Ghassoub and Emma Sinclair, which analyze masculinity in Middle East countries from their origins in the Middle Ages up to the present. There also exist analyses of the images of Arabs that are prominent in the United States, that is, the stereotypes of the Arab male, which are characterized by their ambivalence since they combine notions of femininity—related to Orientalism—with ideas of hyper-masculinity—associated with terrorism or the Holy War. These issues are dealt with in works by Jack G. Shaheen *Arab and Muslim Stereotyping in American Popular Culture* (1999) or *Real Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People* (2001).

These studies have been used to contrast his ideas with the images of the Arab male depicted by Arab American women writers in their fiction. That is to say, the theory on Arab masculinities and the stereotypes of the Arab male that predominate in

the United States has been applied to the analysis of the construction of masculinity in contemporary Arab American literature written by women such as Diana Abu-Jaber, Elmaz Abinader, Etel Adnan, or Mona Simpson. These writers provide alternative models of the Arab and Arab American man which withdraw from the stereotypes that circulate in the West, and offer a negotiation between the masculine ideals of the Arab and the American male.

1.2.2.5 Chicano Masculinities - Bárbara Ozieblo

Masculinity studies have developed their theoretical concepts and definitions from women's studies and feminism. Recently, critics such as Carla McDonough, David Savran and Robert Vorlicky have applied them to theatre studies, producing interesting works which have given rise to the analysis of the crisis of masculine identity in the works of three female playwrights from different ethnic backgrounds: Suzan-Lori Parks (African American), Paula Vogel (Anglo-American), and Cherríe Moraga (Chicana). Our analysis demonstrates how these playwrights reach similar conclusions regarding issues on masculinity.

If there is truth in Octavio Paz's words that "the woman lives imprisoned in the image imposed by masculine society," it is also true that men as well are prisoners of the images they have created for themselves. That is, the "crisis of masculinity" at the end of the twentieth century has its roots in a patriarchal society that has imposed on all of us, men and women, certain role models and rules of behavior which have been internalized to a greater or lesser extent, and that are in opposition to our own well-being. In their plays, Parks, Vogel and Moraga do not appropriate themselves of the male experience for creating an ideal man, as many men have done when writing about women. On the contrary, they attempt to discover the reasons behind their male characters' inadmissible behavior. However, for these authors, to understand the reasons for such behavior is not the same as justifying it. To attempt to understand why men behave in a certain manner within certain circumstances is a means by which to accelerate its eradication.

The plays which have been analyzed are *Topdog/Underdog* (2001) by Suzan-Lori Parks, winner of the 2002 Pulitzer Prize; *How I Learned to Drive* (1997) by Paula Vogel, and *Shadow of a Man* (1990) by Cherríe Moraga. In *Topdog/Underdog* Park analyzes the relationship between two African American brothers who are oppressed as

a result of racism and of their sexuality. In *How I Learned to Drive* Vogel, who is white and lesbian, depicts a story of sexual harassment by which she forces the spectator/reader to rethink the "internalized" patriarchal discourse which condemns certain behaviors without exploring the reasons behind them. Moraga, in her play *Shadow of a Man*, delves into the concept of masculinity in Chicano culture and how it affects the relations between men and women. The theatre of these three playwrights is characterized by the effort, typical of brechtian and artaudian theatre, to make the audience/reader react to the hegemonic models of behavior in order to reach an understanding of how to eradicate them from our social reality.

1.2.3 RE-READING AND RE-WRITING THE CLASSICS - Rodrigo Andrés

One of the contributions of feminist political and theoretical thinking to humanities, in general, and to literary studies, specifically, consists of a new paradigm and a new methodology for re-reading the classical works that conform the Western literary canon.

During the last three decades, various feminist theoretical works, since the pioneer volume by Kate Millet *Sexual Politics* (1970), have examined the distortions in the portrayals of female characters created by male writers in order to serve their own interests. Recently, however, what is being examined is the distortions in the portrayal of masculinity in the Western literary canon. As part of our research, Rodrigo Andrés has focused on analysing the results of this new field within gender studies applied to literature.

In order to achieve these aims, Andrés divided his work in three stages, coinciding with each year of the research project. In the first stage he revised the most notorious contributions of masculinity studies applied to the U.S. literary canon. The results of his study were presented in the AEDEAN congress which took place in Salamanca 2003. Andrés underlined the homophobia inherent in the work of major male theorists on masculinity studies in American literature. As an example, he analyzed the classical work by David Leverenz *Manhood and the American Renaissance* (1989) due to its diffusion among scholars specialized on the nineteenth century, gender, psychoanalysis and sexuality.

In the second stage, Andrés analyzed how a number of American female writers decided to incorporate men's studies criticism into their creative work so as to produce texts that would re-examine the masculinity of fictional characters in the classics. An

excellent example of such a literary strategy is the novel *Ahab's Wife* (1999) whose author, Sena Jeter Naslund, re-writes Herman Melville's character Captain Ahab from *Moby Dick* (1851). She analyzes the character from the perspective of his wife, who is able to see the human being behind the social mask of a callous ship captain. She distinguishes between the social masculinity of her husband and Ahab's genuine humanity, which has been oppressed by the norms of behavior demanded by that social role model of manhood. Rodrigo Andrés made a presentation of the analysis of the novel at the AEDEAN congress which took place in Valencia in December 2004.

In the third stage, Andrés explored how the reading of this type of re-writings of classical literary texts, from the viewpoint of the new studies of masculinity, can contribute to revalue the socio-cultural conditions that motivated those canonical writers to present certain masculinity models, either as a means of perpetuating them or, on certain occasions, to denounce them. From this perspective, Andrés's participation in the AEDEAN congress that took place in Jaén in 2005 consisted of documenting how his own interpretation of Sena Jeter Naslund's re-reading of Herman Melville's work has led him to re-read the correlation between the kind of masculinity that, according to the most notorious biographers of the author (Hershell Parker, Laurie Robertson-Lorant) characterized him, and Melville's denouncement of dominant masculinity in the mid-nineteenth century, white, northern United States, and which would become so influential in the Western world the following century.

The conclusions of Rodrigo Andrés's research concerning the re-readings of these classics from the perspective of masculinity studies since the end of the twentieth century and beginning of the twenty-first point at the richness of the interaction between gender theories and the literary canon in order to reach two objectives: to underline the distortions underneath the construction of hegemonic, Western masculinity and to point at the emergence of new masculinities which, being more open to dialog and attentive to the sexual, gender, social class and racial "Other", may become a threat to Western social hierarchies.

1.2.4 Masculinities and the Detective Novel - Bill Phillips

For some years the detective novel has been recognized as a literary genre worthy of scholarly research. However, although the genre is characterized by offering a very

conventional model of masculinity, it has only been recently that it has been analyzed within the frame of gender studies. *Murdering Masculinities* by Greg Forster, published in 2000, is a study of the classic detective novel of the 30s, 40s, and 50s, which analyzes the detective as a model of masculinity. In the United States, attention has been paid in recent years to the detective novel written by women and with female detectives as their main characters. The woman detective questions both the literary and sexual masculinity model. This gives the possibility for a female detective to have either a masculine or feminine behavior, or a combination of both. An important study of the figure of the female detective is *Detective Agency* by Priscilla L. Walton and Manina Jones.

The original contribution of this particular field to our research project is the specific study of sexism, racism, and homophobia in the classical detective novel, and the analysis of the changes of the literary genre since the decade of the 70s. Since then, detective novels with female detectives (written by women) and male detectives from different ethnic backgrounds and sexual orientations have appeared as main characters of the detective novel and have been the object of our study. We have analyzed the alternative models of masculinity proposed by these contemporary novels. American authors such as Walter Mosley, James Sallis, and George Pelecanos are of great interest and importance due to their deconstruction of the traditional model. Female authors like Paula L. Woods are outstanding for offering a new, alternative model of masculinity which rejects sexism, racism, and homophobia, and shares with the female characters of the novel the desire for creating a world without prejudice, injustice and inequality.

2. OBJECTIVES

The overall objective of our research project has been to analyze in depth Western masculinities focusing on the representations of manhood in the contemporary literary production of the United States (1980-2003), particularly in texts written by American women writers. Our hypothesis is that both literary and filmic texts are two of the most influential symbolic fields in the construction of gender role models and, consequently, the most appropriate fields of study for our analysis.

We have carried out our study of the representations of manhood by means of applying an interdisciplinary theoretical methodology to the selected corpus. This analysis has been based, on the one hand, on the deconstruction of hegemonic masculinity and, on the other, on exploring alternative and more dialoguing models of manhood. As a result, the specific objectives of our study have focused on:

- To make visible masculinity as a cultural construct which is based on hierarchical structures of power relations like gender, race, and sexuality.
- To include the most recent theoretical contributions on the matter from psychology, sociology, gender, race, and sexual studies.
- To apply this theoretical corpus to the analysis of the representation of masculinity in American literary (and filmic) texts, especially those written by women, in the last two decades.
- To provide the necessary critical apparatus in order to deconstruct hegemonic masculinity as the agent of social inequalities and, at the same time, give light to new, alternative models of masculinity which, fortunately, are being formulated in U.S. literature.
- To broaden gender studies by incorporating the increasing dialogue between feminist theory and masculinity studies.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Working Hypothesis

Our starting point is the hypothesis that masculinity is a cultural construct which defines itself by binary oppositions: to be "a man" means *not* to be a woman, ethnic, or homosexual (Segal 1990). Consequently, hegemonic masculinity is based and reasserts itself through sexism, racism, and homophobia. To analyze the representations of masculinity can contribute to look at the traditional models of hierarchical manhood in a critical way and, therefore, to question them. We argue that, due to its cultural nature, masculinity can also be socially deconstructed.

3.2 Corpus Selection

— Defining the themes: We have made a selection of **themes** which well known masculinity theorists such as Michael Kimmel, Lynne Segal, Harry Brod, Bob Connell, and Victoria Sau, among others, consider to be fundamental within masculinity studies and which have been specified in section 3.4: "Themes."

— Spatial limit: Bearing in mind the education and training of the research members on American literature, we have limited the area of study to contemporary **U.S. women writers** who, having been trained in feminism, are extremely critical of patriarchal values that discriminate according to gender, race, and sexuality. The testimonies of these authors from different cultural backgrounds are essential for analyzing masculinity in increasingly multicultural societies.

— Chronological limit: We have focused on the **last two decades** of literary production in the United States, since it is an ideal period to be analyzed for explaining the present moment and, as we have already pointed out, it was since the 1980s when scholars analyzing masculinities began to articulate a discourse, inspired by feminism, that reviews the normative models of hegemonic masculinity. In fact, the establishment of masculinity studies is the answer to a period in which the redefinition of gender roles was being seen as one of the great revolutions of the new century.

3.3 Methodological Development

As far as the methodology used is concerned, our starting point is the hypothesis that masculinity is a cultural construct which defines itself by binary oppositions: to "be a man" means *not* being a woman, ethnic or homosexual (Segal, 1990). Consequently, hegemonic masculinity is based and reaffirmed via sexism, racism, and homophobia. However, we argue that, due to its cultural nature, masculinity can also be socially deconstructed. With the aim of analyzing this process, we have used critical perspectives from different fields. The methodological focus of sociologists specialists on the matter has allowed us to prove that masculinity is not a fixed and unmovable concept, but alters according to the historical moment, social class, age, sexual orientation, ethnicity, etc. The anthropological perspective has allowed us to observe how different cultures within the United States—white (mainstream) culture and cultures from the different ethnic minorities—construct different masculine codes. Moreover, we have noted that the traditional masculinity cult includes all the elements of patriarchal domination. From the point of view of psychology, we have analyzed how the parameters of hegemonic masculinity determine masculine behavior and the relationships between men—regarding friendship, fatherhood, and violence—as well as conditioning the relationships between men and women, frequently producing structures of domination and, ultimately, gender violence.

In relation to these methodological sources, the interviews that were carried out in New York to five theorists, specialists on masculinity studies, have been very helpful. The conversations held with Michael Kimmel, sociologist and director of the Center for the Study of Men and Masculinities (SUNY), David Gilmore, anthropologist (SUNY), Krin Gabbard, theorist of film studies (SUNY), David Eng, a specialist on masculinity and studies of race (Rutgers) and Carolyn Dinshaw, director of the Center for the Study of Gender and Sexualities at New York University, have been essential for our research. A selection of these interviews have been published on DVD, *La masculinidad a debate (Debating Masculinity)*, edited by Àngels Carabí and J.M. Armengol. All the interviews will be published in book form with the same title (Icaria editorial).

3.4 Themes and Distribution of Research Work

On the one hand, the research work has consisted of a first stage for providing our analyses with the necessary multidisciplinary theoretical foundations, which has been carried out by Dr. Michael Kimmel (sociologist), Dr. Victoria Sau (psychologist), and Dr. Josep M. Armengol (literary theory and masculinities). On the other, this theoretical part has been applied to the analysis of the selected literary corpus, which was carried out in the following way:

— Masculinity and Warfare (Dr. Cristina Alsina): This theme has been analyzed in relation to the works by Southern, female writers, especially focusing on the texts by Bobbie Ann Mason and Jayne Anne Phillips.

— Masculinity and Ethnicity (Dr. Àngels Carabí, Dr. Bárbara Ozieblo, Dr. Bill Phillips, Isabel Seguro, Marta Bosch): We have approached this theme by studying the works of female ethnic writers who analyze the way in which concepts of race, class, and sexuality interrelate to shape different masculinity models. We have explored works by African American (Toni Morrison, Gloria Naylor), Native American (Louise Erdrich, Leslie Silko), Arab American (Diana Abu-Jaber, Elmaz Abinader), Asian American (Fae Myenne Ng, Velina Hasu Houston, Wakako Yamauchi), and Hispanic (Sandra Cisneros, Cherríe Moraga, Maria Irene Fornes) female writers.

— Masculinity and the re-reading of the classics (Dr. Rodrigo Andrés): This line of research points at the fertility of the interaction between gender theories and the re-reading of American canonical texts in order to achieve two aims: to underline the distortions supporting the construction of Western, hegemonic masculinity and to show new, alternative masculinities which, being more dialoguing and considerate towards the sexual, gender, class, or racial "Other", can threaten the social hierarchies in the West. This theme has been developed by Dr. Rodrigo Andrés in his study of the work by Sena Meter Naslund who re-writes the character of Captain Ahab in Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*.

— Masculinity and the Detective Novel (Dr. Bill Phillips): This theme has been analyzed by paying particular attention to women writers such as Sue Grafton, Paula L.

Woods, and Sara Paretsky, taking into account that, traditionally, the detective novel has been associated with a world and images conventionally masculine. In recent years, women writers have been publishing detective novels with women as their main protagonists. For this reason the figure of the woman detective has been analyzed as a means of undermining the sexism, racism, and homophobia of the classical detective novel, especially since the publication of analytical studies such as *Detective Agency* by Priscilla L. Walton and Manina Jones.

4. RESULTS

4.1 PUBLICATIONS: DVD and Books

4.1.1. DVD *Debating Masculinity / La masculinidad a debate* (2007)

4.1.2. *La masculinidad a debate* (forthcoming in 2007)

4.1.3. *Hombres soñados por escritoras de hoy: figuras masculinas en la literatura norteamericana* (forthcoming in 2008)

4.1.4. *Multiculturalism and American Women Writers: Early Testimonies* (forthcoming in 2008)

4.1.5. *Herman Melville: poder y amor entre hombres* (2007)

4.2. CONFERENCES AND SEMINARS

4.1. PUBLICATIONS: DVD and Books

4.1.1. DVD *Debating Masculinity / La masculinidad a debate*

Authors: Àngels Carabí and Josep M. Armengol

Publishers: Publicacions UB, 2005

Length: 35 minutes

The DVD includes a 35-minute selection of the interviews that were carried out in New York to renowned specialists in studies of masculinities from different academic fields: sociology, anthropology, literary and filmic studies, and studies of race and sexuality. Michael Kimmel (SUNY), David Gilmore (SUNY), Krin Gabbard (SUNY), David Eng (Rutgers University) and Carolyn Dinshaw (NYU) are the interviewees who provide us with their innovating thoughts on the field.

4.1.2 *Debating Masculinity*, Àngels Carabí and Josep M. Armengol (eds.)
Icaria editorial, forthcoming in 2007

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Krin Gabbard, estudios de cine
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David Leverenz, crítica literaria
5. **Perspectivas queer**
Carolyn Dinshaw, estudios de sexualidad
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David Eng, estudios de raza y etnicidad
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Linda Jones, estudios árabes e islámicos
8. **Biología y géneros**
Patricia Adair Gowaty, bióloga evolucionista
9. **Los hombres tras el feminismo: ¿Qué queda por decir?**
Lynne Segal, psicóloga

Epílogo

La masculinidad a debate

Lynne Segal en diálogo con el grupo de investigación "Construyendo nuevas masculinidades," Universitat de Barcelona:

Cristina Alsina, Rodrigo Andrés, José María Armengol, Marta Bosch, Àngels Carabí, William Phillips, Isabel Seguro.

Autor@s

4.1.3. *Hombres soñados por escritoras de hoy: figuras masculinas en la literatura norteamericana*, Cristina Alsina, Rodrigo Andrés, Àngels Carabí (eds), Colección Atenea, Universidad de Málaga, (forthcoming in 2008)

(Index and articles by Bárbara Ozieblo, Josep M. Armengol, and Carmen Manuel enclosed)

The proposed volume is a collection of articles which explore the representations of masculinity in the works of American women writers in the last twenty years. These authors examine traditional masculinity which discriminates according to gender, race, social class, sexuality, age, nationality, etc. The authors studied deconstruct such concepts and, in many cases, re-write hegemonic masculinity, providing alternative and more humane ways of being a man.

Consequently, male violence is explored through texts by Bobbie Ann Mason and Jayne Anne Phillips, which has as its maximum exponent warfare such as the Vietnam War. Authors like Tillie Olsen and Grace Paley delve into the way in which the difference of social class shapes different male behaviors, and offer an understanding view of working class men as co-victims of social injustice and as potential partners, both at the level of personal and political compromise.

Within the framework of the increasingly multicultural nature of American society and of others in general, the women writers that we have chosen analyze the way in which the concepts of race, gender, and class interrelate with each other within the context of cultural pluralism. With such a background, they examine themes like friendship between men, paternal relations, male violence and sexuality, and they propose alternative ways of being a man that go beyond the frontiers established by gender and ethnic concepts. The selection of authors come from a wide range of cultural backgrounds in American society, such as Toni Morrison, Alice Walker, Gloria Taylor, Sapphire, Suzan Lori-Parks (African American), Louise Erdrich (Native American), Cherríe Moraga (Chicana), Wakako Yamauchi and Velina Hasu Houston (Asian American), and Diana Abu-Jaber and Elmz Abiander (Arab American).

With regards to the detective novel genre, we will explore how authors such as Sue Grafton, Paula L. Woods, and Sara Paretsky question the traditional male behavior

of the urban hero—the detective—in relation to violence (which acquires a negative connotation), to their private relations, and in the cases in which the detective is not a man, but a woman.

This volume is the result of the three years of research carried out by the members of the research project "Constructing New Masculinities: the Representation of Masculinity in the Literature and Film of the United States (1980-2003)", Instituto de la Mujer, Ref. no. 62/03.

Authors: Cristina Alsina (UB), Rodrigo Andrés (UB), Josep M. Armengol (UB), Marta Bosch (UB), Àngels Carabí (UB), María del Mar Gallego (U. Huelva), Carmen Manuel (UV), Bárbara Ozieblo (UMA), William Phillips (UB), Isabel Seguro (UB)

4.1.4. *Multiculturalism and American Women Writers: Early Testimonies*

Àngels Carabí (ed.), Publicacions de la Universitat de València, Biblioteca Javier Coy d'estudis nord-americans, (forthcoming in 2008)

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4.1.5. *Herman Melville: Poder y amor entre hombres*, Rodrigo Andrés, Publicacions de la Universitat de València (PUV), Biblioteca Javier Coy d'estudis nord-americans: 2007.

Dr. Andrés argues that the American writer Herman Melville (1819-1891) is inscribed within a literary tradition of love between men that questions patriarchal values and, potentially, acts as a vehicle for the creation of more egalitarian societies. In this sense, Dr. Andrés examines the way in which love between men can have a subversive nature in literature and in social relations.

4. CONFERENCES AND SEMINARS

XXVII AEDEAN Congress, Salamanca – December, 2003

Round Table: “A Men’s Studies Approach to American Literatura: Theory into Practice”

Panel: “Feminist and Gender Studies”

Participants: Dra. Àngels Carabí, Dr. Rodrigo Andrés y Sr. Josep M^a Armengol

"Masculinity Studies: an Overview"

Àngels Carabí

Universitat de Barcelona

This brief overview aims to trace the emergence of masculinity studies since its origins (1970s) and to highlight some of its current theoretical inquiries.

In the past decade, masculinity studies have consolidated as a field of critical analysis which seeks to rethink the meanings of masculinity. Men’s studies scholarship emerged in the United States in the 1970s as a response to second wave feminism and to the questioning of traditional male behaviors stimulated primarily by World War II, its aftermath, and the Vietnam war (Jeffords). First wave men’s studies scholarship (1970s-1980s) centered its attention on the experience of white, middle class men, giving birth to movements like the profeminist movement which sought gender equality by deconstructing male privileges and by changing men. Other types of movement were the mythopoetic movement (Bly) and the Promise Keepers who wanted to reconstruct masculinity from an essentialist perspective. However, notions of unified identities were challenged by the emergence of postmodernism and poststructuralism in the 1980s and 1990s which brought new research perspectives on masculinity studies. Just as feminism had initially interrogated fundamental concepts such as woman, femininity, women’s experiences, and patriarchy and the sex/gender division, current studies of masculinity are exploring how men are constituted as gendered social subjects. To move away from the universalized notion of man, second-wave masculinity studies has shown that masculinity has multiple meanings which vary over time and across cultures

(Rotundo, Petersen). Moreover masculinities, rather than fixed identities, are open to produce new configurations in changing intercultural contexts (Petersen). Recent investigation has been focusing on the socially constructed differences existing between men, a position which undermines previous notions that differences only exist between men and women; this analysis sustains that men's realities are plural, that men create their identities with the perception of other men and that hierarchies have been determining men's relationships (Brod, Kaufman, Kimmel). One of the most radical advances in studies of masculinities comes from the feminisms of the 1980s-1990s and by queer studies which have transformed the critical inquiry by not only fostering alternative masculinities but by seeking wide rearticulations of masculinity. Eve Kossofsky Sedgwick's interrogations into male sexuality have turned gay studies into one of the most significant analytical fields of masculinity studies. The contributions of Judith Butler and Judith Halberstam have helped to relocate the notions of masculinity and identification which defy patriarchal constructions of men (and women) (Wiegman).

Since the late 1990s masculinity studies has also been paying attention to issues of ethnicity. Race masculinity studies emerged out of the concerns raised by men of color who feel absent from the emerging body of criticism on this field. These male critics (Awkward, Eng, Mirande) as well as female critics (Anzaldúa, hooks) claim that masculinities are not exclusively constructed within men's power over women but in structures of exclusion based on hierarchies which subordinate racialized men (Robinson). The insights of race studies are stimulating an innovative field of analysis which focuses on the need to explore white masculinities as racialized identities as well as to reflect on the concept of whiteness as a political construction (S. Robinson). As scholarly masculinity studies is progressively being influenced by a wide range of feminisms, queer studies and race studies, there is a growing need to advance new dialogues between masculinity studies and these other disciplines.

The aim of the panel "Man's Approach to American Literature: Theory into Practice" is to show how a rereading of American literature from the perspective of masculinity studies can enrich the interpretation of the text.

Rodrigo Andrés argues that men's studies have only recently incorporated an analysis of male homosexualities. Whereas some women critics have considered gay men as pioneers in the creation of new attitudes amongst men and between men and

women, most heterosexual men doing men's studies still show a strong homophobic bias in their analysis and even appropriation of the historical experience of gay men.

Josep M^a Armengol's article argues that analyzing literary texts of different social and historical periods can show how American society's dominant ideals of masculinity have changed over the past two centuries. He also contends that masculinity studies shift the focus of criticism from universal and abstract dilemmas to men's intimate and personal concerns, especially those related to their perceptions of masculinity.

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Over the last two centuries, Western cultures have worked hard to undo the figure of the homosexual man with power, creating instead the figure of the effeminate homosexual, understanding as "feminine" aspects such as weakness and passivity, both at the physical and at the emotional level. The intention behind this strategy has been to neutralize an important threat to the hierarchies of gender, based on the correlation of the binary pair "masculine"/"feminine" with that of "active"/"passive". The figure of the homosexual male has been excluded from the realm of masculinity and included instead in the non-privileged component in the category of knowledge of gender. In this way, masculine heterosexuality has eliminated from its midst a type of masculinity that can be interpreted as being more flexible because, among other things, it accepts a relational, and therefore, non-essentialist sexuality which challenges "active" and "passive" roles, and which dares explore the power, the agency and the pleasure that exist in so-called masculine "passivity". Institutional discourses have been crucial in the de-masculinization of the gay man. According to Lynne Segal,

For over a hundred years now scientific and popular belief has held that male homosexuality derives from and expresses something '>feminine' in men - the absence of appropriate levels of masculinity... - The connection made between gender inversion and homosexuality served not only to control and

punish homosexual behaviour, but also to define and maintain appropriate definitions of masculine and feminine behaviour (Segal, 1990, pp. 135-38).

Towards the end of the twentieth century, the media and some academics have begun to discuss an incipient “crisis of masculinity”. Men’s studies all over the Western hemisphere have even begun to present “man” as a *new* victim of patriarchy who, lost in a new cultural order and without clear role models to follow, should start thinking of himself, like women, as co-victims of patriarchy.

This new debate about the epistemological crisis of masculinity makes us consider the following questions: Are we going to keep using the term “masculinity” as an equivalent of “heterosexuality”? If we do, chances are we are condemning masculine homosexuality, once again, to the space in between that we have not yet been able to fully define. A second question could be: are we going to ask the “new man” (heterosexual by definition) to undergo a profound revision and renegotiation of the values historically and culturally ascribed to the “masculine” and the “feminine” without contemplating in this analysis the experience of those men who historically have been forced to negotiate - both at the personal level and as a community - between those two concepts, given the pressures of a society that is both patriarchal and heterosexist? And, finally, can we start any analysis of the culture of men and of its interaction with the culture of women without incorporating an analysis of the culture of gay men?

We have to admit that over the last few years, the field of men’s studies has begun to incorporate male homosexuality as an intrinsic component of any analysis of masculinities, given that, according to Lynne Segal:

From the point of view of understanding and changing masculinity, however, the really important thing is that gay men have once again had to pioneer new attitudes amongst men - this time, the idea of more open, imaginative and responsible attitudes to sex, and of men nursing and caring for each other (Segal, 1990, p. 164).

This openness in some female critics of masculinities needs to be contrasted with the much more ambiguous attitude in the writings of heterosexual men who theorize about the new masculinities. In the following pages, we will try to argue that

the writings of some men in men's studies can, in some cases, show decades of delay in their assimilation of concepts that have long been debated by the different feminist movements. It is revealing how only as late as 1994 Michael S. Kimmel concluded that "manhood is socially constructed" (Kimmel, 1994, p.120). This conclusion led both M. Kimmel and M. Kaufman to assume that, if the traditional notion of masculinity had been socially constructed, it can now be socially deconstructed. This, in its turn, becomes an invitation to social activism and a celebration of the agency of the citizens of today in bringing about a major social change. The two critics, however, never consider that the notion of traditional masculinity could be not only a social construction but a category of knowledge or a parameter *through* which we understand gender and gender binary oppositions. The fact that neither M. Kimmel nor M. Kaufman contemplates this possibility even if it is just to reject it leaves these critics and their writings in the margins of some of the most interesting questions in the contemporary debate on gender in the academia.

In some cases, the writings of men in men's studies show not only a reluctance to fully engage in contemporary debates but also an attitude that may strike us as homophobic. As an example, let us read closely these fragments of an article written by M. Kimmel, paradoxically, on homophobia:

"The lives of most American men are bounded, and their interests daily curtailed by the constant necessity to prove to their fellows, and to themselves, that they are not sissies, not homosexuals," writes psychoanalytic historian Geoffrey Gorer (1964). "Any interest or pursuit which is identified as feminine interest or pursuit becomes deeply suspect for men" (p. 129)... Our real fear "is not fear of women but of being ashamed or humiliated in front of other men, or being dominated by stronger men" (Leverenz, 1986, p. 451)... Homophobia is a central organizing principle of our cultural definition of manhood. Homophobia is more than the irrational fear of gay men, more than the fear that we might be perceived as gay. "The word 'faggot' has nothing to do with homosexual experience or even with fears of homosexuals," writes David Leverenz (1986). "It comes out of the depths of manhood: a label of ultimate contempt for anyone who seems sissy, untough, uncool" (p. 455). Homophobia is the fear that other men will unmask us, emasculate us, reveal to us and the world that we do not measure up, that we are not real men. We are afraid to let other men see that fear...

The fear of being seen as a sissy dominated the cultural definitions of manhood. As adolescents, we learn that our peers are a kind of gender police, constantly threatening to unmask us as feminine, as sissies. The stakes of perceived sissydom are enormous - sometimes matters of life and death. We take enormous risks to prove our manhood, exposing ourselves disproportionately to health risks, workplace hazards, and stress-related illnesses. Men commit suicide three times as often as women (Kimmel, 1994, pp. 130-33).

These fragments show a tendency of heterosexual men in men's studies to appropriating for their own purposes the experience of being a victim of homophobia. They do it in such a way that the suffering of gay men becomes, actually, the experience of all men, thus universalizing a reality and, interestingly enough, eliminating from their analysis the subjectivity of the victimizers. Whereas it would be impossible for any critic to state without difficulties that racism makes white people suffer and that domestic violence makes men the victims of that violence, both M. Kimmel and M. Kauffman seem to get away with the idea of making straight men the victims of homophobia.

One more aspect that needs examination is how the voice of men doing men's studies is becoming more and more heteronormative in their equation of "Auss" with "Amen" and, one more time, with "heterosexuals". This is evident in the writings of M. Kimmel:

The fear - sometimes conscious, sometimes not - that others might perceive us as homosexual propels men to enact all manner of exaggerated masculine behaviours and attitudes to make sure that no one could possibly get the wrong idea about us... How many of us have translated those ideas and those words into actions, by physically attacking gay men...?... This perspective may help clarify a paradox in men's lives, a paradox in which men have virtually all the power and yet do not feel powerful (see Kaufman, 1993) (Kimmel, 1994, p. 135).

The argument in this quotation seems to be based on two important premises: The first one is that *we* men are not gay men, and the second one is that we *attack* gay men. My personal difficulties in following Kimmel's argument (who seems to move back and forth between his identifications with the victims of homophobia and with the attackers

of gay men) become even more serious when, in a footnote to his article on homophobia, Kimmel suggests the privileges inherent in being gay and powerless:

Such are the ironies of sexism: The powerful have a narrower range of options than the powerless, because the powerless can *also* imitate the powerful and get away with it. It may even enhance status, if done with charm and grace - that is, is not threatening. For the powerful, any hint of behaving like the powerless is a fall from grace (Kimmel, 1994, p. 139).

A brief glimpse at the literature written on homosexual masculinity by some of the most prestigious theoreticians of men's studies in the English speaking academia leads us to conclude that the absolutely necessary incorporation of gay masculinities in the analysis of masculinities is not necessarily exempt from a still strong and not so subtle homophobic bias.

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"A Men's Studies Rereading of American Literature"

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While gender has long been related to women (and, more recently, to gay men), gender studies has only recently begun to explore heterosexual masculinity. However, gendering the heterosexual man remains one of the main challenges of this new century. Hence the need for Men's Studies, which Harry Brod defines as "the study of masculinities and male experiences as specific and varying social-historical-cultural formations". Men's Studies is a small, though growing, and recent field of study, which analyzes masculinities as socially

constructed (and so as liable to be socially de-constructed and changed), context-specific, and culture-bound. Even though the first masculinity studies in the late 1970s and early 1980s were mostly written by psychologists and sociologists, from the 1990s there has been a dramatic increase in the analysis of literary representations of masculinity. Following the work of scholars like James D. Riemer, this study will show how a Men's Studies rereading of American literature can prove beneficial for several reasons.

Traditionally, gender studies have been associated with women. Politically, this is as should be. It was women who underwent -and still undergo- the most detrimental effects of patriarchy and so it was women who had to make gender visible for the first time (Kimmel).

However, gender does not only affect women. For example, the growing body of gay studies has shown how patriarchy also oppresses homosexual men. While gender has long been related to women (and, more recently, to gay masculinities), gender studies has only recently begun to explore heterosexual masculinity. And yet gendering the heterosexual man remains one of the main challenges of this new century.

In this sense, American sociologist Michael Kimmel suggests that (heterosexual) "American men have no history", as they remain largely invisible from a gender studies perspective. In his own words, "American men have no history of themselves *as men*" (Kimmel, 1996, pp. 1-2).

It is already common knowledge that *invisibility* is a precondition for the perpetuation of male dominance. In this respect, Sally Robinson reminds us that "one cannot question, let alone dismantle, what remains hidden from view" (Robinson, 2000, p. 1), while Judith Butler (1990) and Donna Haraway (1991) also talk about the privilege of inhabiting an unmarked body that has been the patrimony of white Western man.

It seems, then, that in order to question the privileges of unmarkedness, one needs to make the normative visible as a category in gender terms. In other words, in order to do away with universalizing notions of (heterosexual) masculinity, one needs, first of all, to gender it and to render it visible. Hence the need for Men's Studies, which Harry Brod defines as

The study of masculinities and male experiences as specific and varying

social-historical-cultural formations. Such studies situate masculinities as objects of study on a par with femininities, instead of elevating them to universal norms. (Brod, 1987, p. 40)

In fact, Men's Studies is a small, though growing, and relatively recent field of study, which analyzes masculinities as socially constructed (and so as liable to be socially de-constructed and changed), context-specific, and culture-bound. So Men's Studies no longer treats masculinity as the universal and unchangeable "referent against which standards are assessed but as a problematic gender construct" itself (Kimmel, 1987, p. 10).

Even though the first masculinity studies in the late 1970s and early 1980s were mainly written by psychologists and sociologists, from the 1990s there has been a dramatic increase in the number of works on literary representations of masculinity. As James D. Riemer (1987) suggests, a Men's Studies rereading of American literature can prove beneficial for several reasons. First, just as the erroneous assumption that male experience equals human experience affected literary criticism's treatment of women as characters and authors, so has it limited our perceptions about men in literature. Therefore, Men's Studies can help transform "supposedly universal human experiences into ones that are distinctly masculine" (Riemer, 1987, p. 289).

A second implication of rereading American literature from a Men's Studies perspective is the "possibility of viewing a significant portion of American literature Y as social documents reflecting our society's ideals of masculinity" (Riemer, 1987, p. 290). In this way, these studies show how "there exists a multiplicity of ideals of American manhood, some of which at times conflict with one another, and how" American "society's predominant ideals of masculinity have changed over the past two centuries" (1987, p. 290).

Sociologically, one should also avoid restricting the analysis of American manhood to literary texts that focus on the values of the white middle class, which Riemer identifies as a common "limitation characteristic of a majority of the research and scholarship in men's studies" (Riemer, 1987, p. 291). By studying literary works that depict men's lives beyond the bourgeois experience, we could see how masculinity may vary according to a man's social, economic and/or racial-ethnic environment. Moreover, we could also analyze how these environments have created or influenced those ideals (1987, p. 291).

Despite the undeniable value of literature as a social document reflecting our masculine ideals, one should insist that such literary analyses cannot be taken as sociological, psychological, or anthropological studies on American masculinity. As Riemer insists, they

cannot be expected to give the whole “truth” about manhood in relation to a particular social, economic, racial-ethnic environment, but they can offer valuable insights into areas for further, potentially corroborating research by sociologists, psychologists, and social anthropologists. (Riemer, 1987, p. 291)

It seems, then, that the relationship between literary studies on masculinity and the larger field of Men’s Studies is “a reciprocal one” (Riemer, 1987, p. 291). Just as rereading American literature for what it says about social conceptions of masculinity widens the base of men's studies knowledge, information gathered from other fields, such as sociology or psychology, “can illuminate our rereading of American literature in new and meaningful ways by affecting the nature of literary criticism itself” (1987, p. 291). While, traditionally, literary criticism by males has viewed the dilemmas of male characters from an abstract perspective, a Men’s Studies approach to American literature shifts “the focus of criticism from the manner in which men’s lives reflect universal concerns or dilemmas to a more intimate, personal concern with how cultural values, particularly those connected with ideals of masculinity, affect the lives of men on a personal Y level” (1987, pp. 293- 294). Since a Men’s Studies approach to American literature focuses on the personal, it can reveal, for instance, “the central role that women play in developing the male sense of masculinity” (1987, pp. 295-296).

Finally, one should not forget that a Men’s Studies approach to American literature starts off from a feminist agenda. In other words, “attitude and ideological approach, not the sex of characters, authors, or critics, delineate the men’s studies perspective” (Riemer, 1987, p. 289). So one could conclude, borrowing a term from feminist literary criticism, that the aim of a Men’s Studies approach to American literature is “re-vision: a revision of the way we read literature and a revision of the way we perceive men and manly ideals” (1987, p. 298). It is a revision that seeks to analyze traditional but also new alternative models of masculinity. As James D. Riemer puts it:

to change men's lives [one needs] more than recognition of the limitations and negative effects of our present ideals of manhood. There also must be a recognition and reinforcement of positive alternatives to traditional masculine ideals and behaviors. (Riemer, 1987, p. 298)

Riemer complains about the “astonishing infrequency with which such alternative images occur” (Riemer, 1987, p. 299). However, a number of writers -especially, though not exclusively, ethnic American women writers such as Toni Morrison, Leslie Silko or Louise Erdrich- have begun to redefine masculinity through their fiction (Carabí, 2003, pp. 99-114). Of course, the positive images of masculinity in these fictional works should be taken as models for reflection, not as a recipe. As Nobel-Prize-winning-novelist Toni Morrison has rightly suggested, fiction

should have something in it that enlightens; something in it that opens the door and points the way. Something in it that suggests what the conflicts are, what the problems are. But it need not solve those problems because it is not a case study, it is not a recipe. (Evans, 1984, p. 341)

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EAAS Congress, Praga – abril 2004

Panel: "Representations of Masculinity in 20th century American literature"

Participants: Dra. Àngels Carabí, Dr. Bob Vorlicky, Dra. Barbara Ozieblo, Dr. William Dow, Sr. Josep M^a Armengol

Panel Moderator

Àngels Carabí

University of Barcelona

Today's panel offers an interesting variety of perspectives on the issues of masculinity. The first presentation centers its attention on masculinity studies' current theoretical foundations and the other presentations focus on the application of theory to the analysis of three literary texts, two of them written by men and one by a woman.

Jose M^a Armengol interrogates principal elements of identification of masculinity, such as whiteness, maleness and heterosexuality from a theoretical point of view.

William Dow analyzes Jack London's work *People in the Abyss*, published in 1902. Dow will show how, in London's work it is the body that recreates and contains the prescribed and proscribed range of social behaviors in relation to masculinity.

Bob Vorlicky analyses Richard Greenberg's play *Take Me Out*, 2003. Vorlicky shows how Greenberg queers the male space by exploring the complex relationships of men among themselves – actually baseball players- in a multiracial and sexually diverse scenario.

Finally, Barbara Ozieblo will explore the point of view of a woman dramatist, Cherrie Moraga's who, in her play, *A Shadow of a Man*, 1994, inverts the specular gaze and focuses on Manuel and his family *as a woman*.

I wish to thank the participation of all the panelists in this debate and the audience for accompanying us.

“Men’s Studies: Theoretical Foundations and Applicability to Literary Theory”

Josep M. Armengol

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As more and more work is being done in the name of men’s studies, it seems necessary to analyze some of its theoretical foundations as well as its applicability to literary theory. It is already common knowledge that women’s studies focuses on women’s experiences, while gay/lesbian/queer studies concentrate on the lives of homosexual men and women. Though men’s studies analyze both gay and heterosexual masculinities and, more recently, masculinities from different social and ethnic backgrounds, it is a fact that, traditionally, its focus has been on white, heterosexual masculinity. Thus, men’s studies seems grounded in a doubtful object of study. In his landmark *White Men Aren’t*, Thomas DiPiero argues, for example, that his research on white masculinity suggests that the principal elements of identification - whiteness, maleness- are impossible ones, since according to the cultural structure that has defined them, “no one could ever be completely white and/or completely male.” In other words, the ideal white man “is not simply a fiction, [...] but a fiction constructed to prohibit comprehensive identification” (DiPiero 4). Insisting further, DiPiero contends that if nobody has ever really been completely white or completely male, then we have a split between our structures of meaning and our sociopolitical practices, which implies that “we have a designation of human identity -white male- that apparently has no real referent in the world in which we live.” “It seems particularly ironic,” DiPiero concludes, “that the standard by which all others have traditionally been measured and through which all are made into fictionalized others is itself an impossible and nonexistent model” (DiPiero, 2002, p. 9).

DiPiero provides two convincing examples to support his argument. First of all, he refers to the well-known “one drop of blood” rule, which developed in the eighteenth century in the American south and has survived up to the present. According to this rule, “no person with any identifiable nonwhite heritage whatsoever [...] can be identified as properly white” (DiPiero, 2002, p. 9). DiPiero wittingly concludes that since no one can account for the sexual dalliances of ancestors

long dead, “a great deal of racial consternation and hysteria arises in the people for whom such pedigree matters” (2002, pp. 9-10).

Second, DiPiero also suggests that the concept of “whiteness” is culture-specific and context-bound (DiPiero, 2002, pp. 10-11). Following Winthrop Jordan, DiPiero argues that the term *white* began to be commonly used as a term to describe/classify human beings toward the end of the seventeenth century. As Jordan himself explains:

There seems to have been something of a shift during the seventeenth century in the terminology which Englishmen in the colonies applied to themselves. From the initially most common term *Christian*, at mid-century there was a marked drift toward *English* and *free*. After about 1680, taking the colonies as a whole, a new term appeared -*white*. (Jordan qtd. in DiPiero, 2002, p. 240)

It appears, then, that white masculinity has been “historically variable -in some cases quite radically” (DiPiero, 2002, p. 10). For example, at the beginning of the twentieth century, Irish and Italian immigrants were not usually regarded as white, although both groups today would most likely be regarded as white by nearly everyone (2002, p.10). Therefore, it becomes very difficult to identify who white males are. As DiPiero exemplifies:

it took a Supreme Court decision to determine whether Bhagat Singh Thind, a native of India who was applying for American citizenship, was white. He wasn't. The Supreme Court held that “the words ‘free white persons’ are words of common speech, to be interpreted in accordance with the understanding of the common man.” (DiPiero, 2002, p. 10)

Indeed, white masculinity appears to be determined at least as much by people's beliefs and opinions on the subject as it is by the physical characteristics that seem to define it (DiPiero, 2002, p. 10). As DiPiero concludes in this respect:

if it were simply the case that any person who appeared to be a white male simply *was* a white male, the identity would have no problematic political or ideological dimension since there would be no question of a legitimacy to which some people were not entitled. That is why we cannot simply and unproblematically point to the person who seems both white and male: you have to

know what he looks like before you can actually see him. (DiPiero, 2002, pp. 10-11)

If the existence of “whiteness” appears, at least, open to questioning, the concept of “heterosexuality” can also be interrogated in a number of ways. Probably, the most radical challenge to the presumed unity and stability of heterosexuality has come from Judith Butler. In her classical *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, Butler suggests, for instance, that the “unity” of gender is the effect of a regulatory practice that tries to render gender identity uniform through a compulsory heterosexuality: “The force of this practice is, through an exclusionary apparatus of production, to restrict the relative meanings of ‘heterosexuality,’ ‘homosexuality,’ and ‘bisexuality’ as well as the subversive sites of their convergence and resignification” (Butler, 1990, pp. 31-32). While Monique Wittig establishes a radical division between heterosexuality and homosexuality, Butler argues against (mis)conceptions of heterosexuality as a coherent model. In this sense, then, Butler coincides with other queer theorists like Carolyn Dinshaw, who also insists on the inextricability of “the normative” and “the deviant,” claiming that sometimes they even become indistinguishable. As Butler concludes in this respect, the ideal of a coherent heterosexuality, which Wittig describes as the norm and standard of the heterosexual matrix, is “an impossible ideal.”

A psychoanalytic elaboration might contend that this impossibility is exposed in virtue of the complexity and resistance of an unconscious sexuality that is not always already heterosexual. In this sense, heterosexuality offers normative sexual positions that are intrinsically impossible to embody, and the persistent failure to identify fully and without incoherence with these positions reveals heterosexuality itself not only as a compulsory law, but as an inevitable comedy. (Butler, 1990, p. 122)

Like Butler, other scholars have also set out to challenge the presumed “unity” and “coherence” of heterosexuality. For example, in his well-known *Gay New York*, George Chauncey explains that the opposition between homosexuals and heterosexuals is very recent, and that it is only after the Second World War that homosexuality and heterosexuality appear as mutually exclusive options. Until that

time, many people shifted from a female to a male lover and heterosexual men could have sex with gay men, without fear of feminization, as long as they played the so-called “masculine” role in the relationship. Indeed, Mason Stokes (Stokes, 2001, pp. 14-15) reminds us that the very concept of heterosexuality has a discrete history. According to Jonathan Ned Katz, the term *heterosexuality* was first used in the American medical context in 1892 in an article by Dr. James G. Kiernan (Katz, 1995, p. 19). In Kiernan’s view, *heterosexuality* had perverse connotations, as it referred to non-reproductive male-female erotic desire. Like Kiernan’s work, Richard von Krafft-Ebing’s *Psychopathia Sexualis* also described the term *heterosexuality* as a non-reproductive, pleasure-centered pathology. However, Krafft-Ebing, unlike Kiernan, begins to refer to heterosexuality as the “normal,” different-sex erotic standard. The reason for this semantic change is obvious: “Because Krafft-Ebing discusses heterosexuality alongside case studies of men troubled by homosexual desire, heterosexuality begins to assume its shape as a cure for deviance, as a thing to strive for” (Stokes, 2001, p. 15). Finally, Freud’s “Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality” helped to consolidate the power of heterosexuality as modern society’s dominant norm. It seems, then, that *heterosexuality* is not a stable, eternal, and immutable referent, since its meanings have radically changed over the years. As Spanish sociologist Òscar Guasch notes in this respect, in reality there are very few heterosexual people, as it is very difficult to fulfill all the requirements of the model: monogamy, vaginal intercourse, erections and orgasms, capacity for reproduction, etc. (Guasch, 2001, pp. 41-42).

If, as it seems, the concept of “heterosexuality” has been radically challenged, the notion of *maleness* (and *femaleness*) has also been put into question. One of the first (and most influential) challenges to the traditional biological distinction between the sexes came from the work of Michel Foucault. In the last chapter of *The History of Sexuality*, Volume I, Foucault suggests that we should give up looking at “sex” as both univocal and causal, and that we should begin treating it as an *effect*, rather than an origin. Indeed, Foucault argues that “sex” is nothing but an effect of the hegemonic discourse of (hetero)sexuality. In his own words:

The notion of “sex” made it possible to group together, in an artificial unity, anatomical elements, biological functions, conducts, sensations, and pleasures, and it enabled one to make use of this fictitious unity as a causal

principle, an omnipresent meaning: sex was thus able to function as a unique signifier and as a universal signified. (Foucault, 1984, p. 154)

So Foucault seems to consider that morphology itself is a direct consequence of a hegemonic epistemology and that power constructs what it claims simply to represent. As Butler explains in this respect, “for Foucault, the body is not ‘sexed’ in any significant sense prior to its determination within a discourse through which it becomes invested with an ‘idea’ of natural or essential sex” (Butler, 1990, p. 92). It seems, then, that the body is only meaningful(l) in the context of power relations:

Sexuality is an historically specific organization of power, discourse, bodies, and affectivity. As such, sexuality is understood by Foucault to produce “sex” as an artificial concept which effectively extends and disguises the power relations responsible for its genesis. (Butler, 1990, p. 92)

Last but not least, it should be added that since most definitions of masculinity rely on the concept of maleness, the concept of masculinity (studies) is itself put under pressure. For instance, Harry Brod’s seminal definition of masculinity studies refers to “the study of masculinities and *male* experiences as specific and varying social-historical-cultural formations” (Brod, 1987, p. 40; emphasis added). From what has been suggested, it appears, then, that the widespread belief in the (fixed) identity of the white heterosexual male is anything but unproblematical. Does it follow, therefore, that we should give up beforehand masculinity studies as well as any attempt to analyze white heterosexual masculinity? Inevitably, the question leads us back to the current debate between identity politics, on the one hand, and postmodernism, on the other.

That the discussion is (also/especially) relevant to masculinity studies will become clear by looking at a number of obviously opposite views on the subject. Many men’s studies scholars advocate a postmodern dissolution of (sexual) identity. Thus, Patrick Grim has argued that sex differences are not so important as is usually assumed. In his own words:

let us suppose that in some case we do have firm and unambiguous empirical evidence of differences between the sexes; let us suppose that we can *prove* that men are characteristically more aggressive, that women are generally

more “communicative,” and the like. What follows from suitably hard data revealing suitably fundamental differences even if we have it? Not as much, I think, as is often assumed. (Grim, 1992, p. 2)

Indeed, relying on a binary model of sexual difference for feminist and masculinity studies can reinforce, rather than deconstruct, patriarchal divisions, even if undesired. As Pierre Bourdieu and Michael Kimmel insist, gender inequality creates gender differences, not the other way around.

Nevertheless, some critics still rely on identity politics and suspect most attempts to dissolve (sexual) difference. For example, Sally Robinson suggests that her work on white masculinity is not worried about “unfairly generalizing about an obviously heterogeneous category,” insisting that “white men in post-liberationist culture *have*, in fact, been lumped into one category.” As she explains:

In fact, I take a certain delight in imagining one possible response to my arguments here. How can we lump *all* white men, regardless of their differences, into one, seemingly monolithic category? The delight comes both from the irony of this question -what feminist woman wouldn't laugh at this? What victim of racial profiling wouldn't snicker at this payback?- and from the fact that anyone who articulates it will be further confirming the arguments I am making. (Robinson, 2000, pp. 20-21)

Rather than choose between fixed notions of sexual identity and the dissolution of sexual difference, a number of scholars have started to rethink the debate in an interesting number of ways. One of the most interesting challenges to the dichotomous debate between identity politics and postmodernism has come from the work of Asian-American queer scholar David L. Eng. In the introduction to *Q & A: Queer in Asian America*, for instance, he argues that most epistemologies are addressed to unacknowledged and universal subjects. For example, he identifies the white, European, middle-class gay man “as the unacknowledged universal subject of lesbian/gay and queer studies” (Eng, 1998, p. 12), just as he sees the white, European, middle-class, heterosexual man as the unacknowledged universal subject of masculinity studies.

However, the assumption of a universal subject for gay and masculinity studies should be questioned for (at least) two different reasons. First, conceptions of

masculinity vary historically and psychically according to the particularities of race, ethnicity, national origin, sexuality, gender, class, and age (Eng, 2001, p. 4), among others. Second, no masculine identity is stable and coherent (2001, pp. 25-34). In Eng's own words, masculine subjectivity is "the hybrid result of internalized ideals and lived material contradictions that were once external" (2001, pp. 25-27). "Even the most orthodox of" masculine "subject positions, finally, are ambivalent and porous" (2001, p. 26).

In order to move beyond these reductionist (mis)conceptions of our gendered identities, Eng advocates the notion of masculinity studies as a "subjectless critique," which has two main implications. First, it acknowledges that masculinity varies historically and culturally by the particularities of race, class, gender, sexuality, and age, among others. Second, it allows for heterogeneity, multiplicity, and contradiction within supposedly stable and unitary male subjectivities, thus moving beyond liberal humanist conceptions of identity as pure and coherent.

Even though Eng advocates a new definition of masculinity studies as "subjectless," his redefinition does not entail doing away with the subject. Indeed, he simply defends a view of the subject as problematic. In this sense, Judith Butler reminds us that there is a key difference between the poststructuralist view whereby the subject never existed and the postmodern argument that sees the subject as heterogeneous and contradictory. "It is in this latter respect that feminism and postmodernism come together. They both view the idea of the subject as problematic, which [...] is not the same as doing away with the subject" (Oliver, 2000, p. 65). Indeed, Eng sees no irreducible contradiction between the view of the subject as problematic and identitarian claims, or between postmodern theory and political practice. After all, the political efficacy of a coalitional gathering under a strategic "we," Eng insists, "in no way requires the ossification of either the label [...] or its contents" (Eng, 1998, p. 9).

From what has been suggested, one could conclude, then, that categories like masculinity and gender continue to be relevant in spite of the postmodern insistence on their indeterminacy and instability. However, this paper contends that (white, heterosexual) masculinity is not unitary and monolithic, but heterogeneous, multiple, and contradictory. Therefore, men's studies should not try to "solve" (were it possible) masculinity's internal contradictions, but, rather, to explore and focus on them. As Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick suggests in her seminal *Epistemology of the Closet*, "the more

promising project would seem to be a study of the incoherent dispensation itself, the indis severable girdle of incongruities under whose discomfoting span, for most of a century, have unfolded both the most generative and the most murderous plots of our culture” (Sedwick, 1990, p. 90). After all, these incongruities are the condition, not the failure, of historical analyses, community-building, and political practice (Dinshaw).

Finally, we will make some reference to men’s studies applicability to literary theory. More specifically, we will attempt to challenge the common claim that there is no relationship between social and literary studies of masculinities, or that literature is of little or no social relevance to the analysis of masculinities. In this sense, Terry Eagleton has proposed a “revolutionary” and “political” criticism that “would dismantle the ruling concepts of ‘literature’, reinserting ‘literary’ texts into the whole field of cultural practices. It would strive to relate such ‘cultural’ practices to other forms of social activity” (Eagleton, quoted in Oliver, 2000, p. 16). In other words, critics like Eagleton attempt to undermine the distinction between the literary and the non-literary, or “the division of art and society whereby art and aesthetic values are confined to the fringes of our lives and are separated from society” (Oliver, 2000, p. 16). As Oliver concludes in this respect, we should try to transgress the “limits between the world and the text” (2000, p. 24), learning to view

the text as a social phenomenon and an ideological act that participated of life through language. Although we cannot assume a direct correspondence between reality and the way it is represented by the text, we can certainly argue that *there is a relation between the text and the socio-historical reality in which it is being produced, reproduced and read*. It is in the ways texts interpret, problematize and/or mediate reality that their political and ideological function may be discerned. (Oliver, 2000, p. 12; emphasis added)

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“A Man and His Shadow as seen by a woman: Cherríe Moraga’s

***Shadow of a Man*”**

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One of the tasks of Women’s Studies has been to wrest control of our selves from the patriarchy, from those myriad male writers bent on creating and re-creating us in their image. Remember how amazed Virginia Woolf was at the number of men who had written about women when she turned to us with the question: “Are you aware, perhaps, that you are the most discussed animal in the universe?” (Woolf, 1985, p. 27) In the second half of the twentieth century women began to write and theorize about ourselves and, for Jane Flax, “The single most important advance in feminist theory is that the existence of gender relations has been problematized” (Flax, 1990, pp. 43-44). Looking at ourselves we have been obliged to look also at those around us and at the social relations so created; this inevitably led us to focus on the oppressor, that is, on the patriarchal system, and so, on men as its representatives. Our opinions and demands caused a little stir and some men, such as Robert Bly, Michael Kimmel and many others responded to the challenge. So, masculinity studies, or men’s studies, has gradually developed its definitions and theories in the footsteps of feminism, and recently has been applied to theater studies by a number of critics, such as Carla McDonough, David Savran and Bob Vorlicky.

Victoria Robinson, among many others, has queried and discussed women’s participation in masculinity studies just as men’s participation in women’s studies has been, and still is, under discussion. What I hope to show today, through an analysis of Chicano dramatist Cherríe Moraga’s early play *Shadow of a Man* (1990), is that women do not attempt to appropriate and create male experience in the same way that men have done when writing about women. As Kate Millet formulated it: “The image of women as we know it is an image created by men and fashioned to suit their needs” (Millet, 1985, p. 46). Or, as Octavio Paz put it: “La mujer vive presa en la imagen que la sociedad masculina le impone” (Paz, 345), that is: women are prisoners of the image that male society imposes on them. Both Millett and Paz could have added that men too are prisoners of the image they have thus created for themselves; Moraga’s *Shadow of a Man* deals with this double imprisonment. Cherríe Moraga presents a truly horrific

situation caused by Manuel's uncertain sense of identity and his need to prove himself as a man. He suffers the consequences as much—if not more than his wife and children. Moraga adopts the impassive stance of observer and refrains from making accusations. By inverting the specular gaze and focusing on Manuel and his family *as a woman*, she attempts to penetrate the situation and the character and so rouses the spectator to pity Manuel and admire his wife Hortensia. Such a positive presentation of men's lack of self-knowledge and identity can only deepen and enrich our understanding of the male predicament, and thus of our own.

Recently, Judith Kegan Gardiner formulated a definition of masculinity and feminism which I would like to quote here: "Masculinity is a nostalgic formation, always missing, lost, or about to be lost, its ideal form located in a past that advances with each generation in order to recede just beyond its grasp. Feminism, in contrast, is a utopian discourse of an ideal future, never yet attained, whose myth celebrates alliances that manage conflicts within comprehensive metanarratives and narratives of comprehension" (Gardiner, 2002, p. 10). Applying this definition to the characters under scrutiny, we could argue that Cherríe Moraga, in *Shadow of a Man*, engages both masculinity and femininity and shows how the male is absorbed in looking back while the women are intent on moving forward.

Shadow of a Man was first performed on 10 November 1990 by Brava! For Women in the Arts and the Eureka Theatre Company in San Francisco. It was directed and the set was designed by María Irene Fornés. Moraga developed the play during her residence at INTAR's 1985 Hispanic Playwrights-in-Residence Laboratory in New York City, so that early versions of the play were presented at readings and performed as a "play in progress." The structural device Moraga uses here is that of the mystery or detective play; the principal action, or crime, has already occurred and the characters have to face the consequences of this crime; there is no moment of crisis or revelation—Manuel's death is a death foreseen—as Moraga guides us through the complicated relationships of this Chicana family. The setting, as given in the stage directions, is indicative of Moraga's rejection of patriarchal models of behavior; the play is performed in "places chiefly inhabited by mothers and daughters" (Moraga, 1994, p. 40), that is, the kitchen, the bathroom, and the daughters' bedroom, but also in the garden behind the kitchen, in which "multiple plant life abounds" (1994, p. 41), thus linking the women to the soil and to the nurture that nature provides. Moraga's meaning

is clear: the home is the women's sphere, and the male, as Hortensia says "stays a stranger in his own home" (1994, p. 83).

The acting space is not presented realistically; rooms are divided by "representative walls that rise about sixteen inches from the floor" (1994, p. 41). This rejection of theatrical conventions, of the traditional *suspension of disbelief*, reminds us constantly that we are watching a play and not a *slice of life* that has somehow appeared in front of us. Realism has been criticized and rejected by many feminist theater critics who see it as a form appropriated by the patriarchy to perpetuate its structures, and although Moraga presents a family and a situation that follow realistic models, the setting shows she was aware of the discussions surrounding realism, and also points in the direction her more recent plays have taken, such as *A Mexican Medea*. The backdrop is a "Mexican painting of a Los Angeles sunset," which Moraga uses to emphasize the Chicano origins of the players and the play and their "otherness" within their own land. This is also indicated by the mixing of Spanish and English, a device frequently used by Chicano writers in order to highlight the struggle between assimilation and otherness.

Manuel's family is caught up in the struggle for assimilation of the younger generation, born and educated in California; for Manuel, the concept of assimilation is not clear-cut but tainted by a disturbing ambiguity. On the one hand, it implies the loss of roots, and thus of identity, and on the other, it relates to the "American success story" and thus becomes a reinforcement of identity. Manuel's son Rigo is about to marry a "gringuita" (Moraga, 1994, p. 46) and although nobody approves, they have all accepted Rigo's decision, except for Manuel who refuses to go to the wedding believing his son has betrayed him. Manuel does not appear till scene three, by which time we already know from the women that his behavior is a source of tension within the family; he regularly comes home late at night, in a drunken stupor, talking to himself. His son's impending wedding is destroying his peace; it symbolizes a rite of passage from ethnic isolationism to assimilation in the majority culture but also from boyhood to manhood. And for Manuel it is a goad to consider his own marriage and the trial of friendship between men he so disastrously submitted himself to. Manuel is much attached to his son and, remembering their closeness and conversations, he moans: "I know they [your eyes] saw lo que sabía mi compadre, that I am a weak man, but they did not judge me. Why do you judge me now, hijo?" (1994, p. 49)

Manuel's private sense of guilt is a secret he cannot bring out into the open; he cannot discuss it, especially with his wife, who participated unwillingly in an act that has destroyed their marriage. Hortensia had always, even before their wedding, felt attracted to Conrado, Manuel's friend and *compadre*. It was a mutual attraction, but one that, out of respect for Manuel, neither was prepared to recognize. Manuel had always looked up to Conrado, seeing in him a model of Mexican masculinity and, at the same time, an example of the American Dream come true, and thus of assimilation. Manuel creates his identity, his vision of himself, by modeling his behavior and attire on Conrado's example. We can assume that there is also a healthy masculine rivalry between the two men, and perhaps more; Carla McDonough points to the fragility of male identity and friendships, indicating that men fear "tenderness or affection for other men" because affection can so easily be interpreted as effeminacy—even in a culture such as the Chicano that is less afraid of demonstrative physical acts than the Anglo (McDonough, 1997, p. 7). The ties between the two men are strengthened when Conrado becomes the godfather of Manuel's first-born, Rigo, who is now about to marry. The relationship of *compadres* is highly significant in Mexican culture; as Moraga informs us in a prefatory note, it is "a very special bond, akin to that of blood ties, sometimes stronger" (Moraga, 1994, p. 41). When Conrado decides to leave Los Angeles—we assume he finds being close to Hortensia without being able to express his desire, painful—Manuel is desperate and prepared to sacrifice all he has to keep his *compadre* near him. So he gives him Hortensia, virtually pushing Conrado into her bed. She resists this man who had always excited her, by his mere presence making "los vellitos on my arm . . . stand straight up" (1994, p. 64); but their mutual desire, and his assurances that "Manuel knows. This is what he wants" (1994, p. 81) overcome her sense of right and wrong.

So it is Manuel that pushes the couple together, and Conrado is sufficiently self-seeking to take advantage of his *compadre*. As Manuel says to his friend: "I loved you, man. I gave you hasta mi propia mujer, but that didn't mean nothing to you. You just went and left. I gave you my fucking wife, cabrón. What does that make me?" (Moraga, 1994, p. 81) Conrado's duplicity is revealed when he returns after many years without a cent, an utter failure in Manuel's eyes —Lupe, the daughter he fathered that fateful night is now a difficult teenager. Manuel blames his *compadre* for destroying his marriage; he complains that after that night, Hortensia had treated him as if he did not

exist and, unable to see his reflection in her eyes, he is reduced to a shadow. As Carla McDonough has pointed out, “Masculine dependency upon the complicity of women, on women’s participation in its fantasy, insure that masculinity is much more dependent, more fractured and precarious, than it wishes to appear” (McDonough, 1997, p. 7).

Manuel had constructed his sense of male identity on the pillars of his reflection in his wife’s eyes, his relationship with Conrado, and his love for his son. According to Octavio Paz, the Mexican word for “male,” *macho*, even before it acquired the negative connotations it has today, meant *chingar*, a complex term for Paz, but one which my Oxford Dictionary translates simply as “to fuck” or “to screw”; “el ‘Macho’ es el Gran Chingón,” affirmed Paz (Paz, 219). Thus Manuel’s sense of identity is linked to his sexual prowess with Hortensia, incarnated in their son Rigo, and in his unspoken rivalry with and desire for Conrado. Having literally given his wife to his *compadre*, assuming, through this act, the submissive role in his relationship with Conrado, Manuel is rendered impotent. Now that Rigo is marrying an Anglo, linking manhood with assimilation, Manuel’s sense of identity totters. He sends for Conrado, begging him to return and ordering Hortensia to treat him with the honor and respect traditionally accorded a *compadre*. He insists that she is nothing to both of them; they will not even talk of her. She will be their servant and their cook, directing all her actions at ensuring that their material needs are satisfied.

The full import of Manuel’s need to submit to his friend’s desire is revealed in the scene when Conrado returns. Moraga achieves this by brief flashbacks, in which her characters momentarily re-enact the past. These moments, or flashes, are marked by Glen Miller’s “Sunrise Serenade” and by the lighting that “*assumes a dreamlike, surreal quality*” (Moraga, 1994, p. 78). Manuel interrupts the reunion between Conrado and Hortensia and, knowing now that his *compadre* is not a living example of the “American success story” (1994, p. 69), and that he is still interested in his wife, Manuel cannot endure his deception and takes an overdose.

Although Manuel does have a physical stage presence, we are constantly aware of him through Hortensia’s eyes, and also those of her sister Rosario, and the two daughters, Lupe and Leticia. Hortensia, talking about her marriage with her sister and daughters just before the funeral, comments: “Funny, when a man is asleep, that’s when you really get to know him. You see the child’s look on his face, before he wakes up

and remembers he's a man again" (1994, p. 83). Moraga has fully reversed the "customary specular relation of subject and object between a male gaze and a female body," a reversal to which Gardiner attributes the "ambivalent dependency and antagonism toward feminism" (Gardiner, 2002, p. 9) that masculinity studies frequently expresses. In *Shadow of a Man*, our gaze and that of the women characters is directed on a man who has been deprived of his role models and his manhood not by others, but by his unpardonable sin against the humanity of his wife. However, he does not recognize this as a sin against Hortensia but as an offense, instigated by him, against his property, his wife. He has exposed himself, shown his fragility as a man and, knowing himself observed, believes that everybody knows his secret and that "they're all laughing at what they see inside my head" (Moraga, 1994, p. 65). Although the women's gaze prevails in the play, Moraga does allow Manuel to express his fears and his horror at the loss of his identity, with the result that we can sympathize with his predicament and are less willing to lay all the responsibility on his shoulders. Such self-expression and introspection would of course be shunned by a "truly" masculine man.

Hortensia's comment on a man appearing like a child in his sleep is part of the symbolic structure of the play that divides the family into the male and female spheres and presents her, and her sister Rosario, as nurturing mother figures. Manuel is reduced to a baby when he returns home drunk and Hortensia has to undress him; when, later, he is about to meet Conrado, he dresses, and although he does this by himself, he does it in the presence of the women who observe him, "*their eyes never leaving him*" (Moraga, 1994, p. 75). He thus becomes the little boy who can now dress himself, but still needs the supervision of the mother, until, once dressed, the clothes give him his manly identity and "*He imagines himself a different man, in Conrado's image*" (1994, p. 75).

Shadow of a Man attempts to understand the predicament of a man who has lost his sense of self, and who, having mortally offended the one woman who could reaffirm him, cannot find himself. Although I have focused on this aspect of the play, Moraga has stated that *Shadow of a Man* is a "family" play in which she "tried to expose the secrets and silences affecting both men and women in the traditional Chicano household" (Moraga, qtd. in Ramírez, 2000, p. 119). As Alicia Arrizón has indicated, the early Chicano movement—at the time of which the play is set—emphasized the value of the family and of patriarchal power, and she describes the Chicana family as being "saturated with sexism, homophobia, and internal oppression" (Arrizón, 1999. p.

8) in which women's participation is reduced to what Moraga has called the three f's "feeding, fighting and fucking." (Moraga, qtd. in Arrizón, 1999, p. 8). In order to examine these functions of women, Moraga has placed the women in the subject position, thus establishing Manuel as the "other." Moraga can then deal with domestic violence, with mother-daughter relationships, and with a lesbian awakening. The domestic violence is an obvious result of Manuel's loss of identity; he drinks in order to forget that he is nothing but a shadow, and, unable to assume the responsibility for his act, blames Hortensia, frequently resorting to violence. It is the daughters, Lupe and Leticia, who have to care for her at such moments, and their response to the scenes they witness is poles apart. Seventeen-year old Leticia, determined not to be the submissive woman her mother is, decides to give away her virginity because she has already learnt, observing the males in her life, that sex "is not about love. It's power. . . . Power they drop into our hands, so fragile the slightest pressure makes them weak with pain" (Moraga, 1994, p. 78). She explains to her mother that she had "opened [her] legs . . . [n]ot for me to be worthless, but to know that my worth had nothing to do with it" (1994, p. 78). Just as Hortensia is Leticia's confidant, so Rosario, the divorced aunt, is the person that twelve-year old Lupe chooses to confide the lesbian desires that torment her. By the end of the play, Lupe freely acknowledges her attraction for a schoolgirl friend.

In *Shadow of a Man* Moraga has not followed the example of male writers who have only two types of women in their repertoire: the temptress or the angel; she has, instead, shown how the need to enact the gender roles imposed by society is destructive and oppressive not only for women, but also for men. Manuel is unable to cope with the role he believes he should play in his family and before his *compadre*; as Susan Faludi, in an unusual application of female flower imagery to men, has affirmed, "masculinity [is] a fragile flower—a hothouse orchid in constant need of trellising and nourishment" (Faludi, 1992, p. 83). Unfortunately, Manuel is no wilting orchid; floundering in the vacuum created by the loss of self-esteem, he has recourse to physical and psychological violence in order to reassert himself. Rather than create Manuel in her own image as male writers have done for centuries with their women characters, Moraga has created a true-to-life protagonist we can pity.

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XXVIII AEDEAN Congress, Valencia – diciembre 2004

Round Table: “‘Men by Women’: Contemporary American Women Writing about Men. Re-visiting Grand Narratives of Hegemonic Masculinity”

Panel: “Feminist and Gender Studies”

Participants: Dra. Àngels Carabí, Dr. Rodrigo Andrés, Dr. William C. Phillips y Sra. Cristina Alsina Rísquez

“Studies of Masculinities and Women’s Literature”

Àngels Carabí

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Traditionally, gender studies have focused on women. Since the 1960s, feminism has made significant contributions to the analysis of gender as a cultural and political construction. In making gender visible, they have not only questioned cultural concepts of femininity but have stimulated the analysis of masculinity as a gendered construction. This has, in turn, given rise to the so-called *studies of masculinities*, which, inspired by feminist insights, have started to explore “men and masculinities as specific and varying social-cultural-historical formations” (Brod, 1987), rather than as universal paradigms. Masculinity studies have thus shown how masculinity varies from culture to culture and over historical time. In terms of academic disciplines, the focus of masculinity studies, as American sociologist Michael Kimmel indicates, seems to have moved from psychology to sociology to history. Today, much masculinity scholarship seems to be centered on the analysis of filmic and literary representations of masculinity.

Therefore, this panel, attempts to explore representations of masculinity in contemporary American women’s fiction. Given women’s long awareness and analysis of gender as a cultural and political category, fiction by women offers some of the most innovative and subversive representations of masculinity and gender relations in contemporary American culture. Rodrigo Andrés explores how Sena Jeter Naslund rereads and revisits issues of the American nineteenth century offering a historical critique of traditional masculinity. Cristina Alsina analyzes how two writers of the “Vietnam Generation”, Bobbie Ann Mason and Jayne Anne Phillips create fictional worlds which explore changes in the definitions of male gender. William Phillips looks

at representations of masculinity in the crime novels of Sara Paretsky, Sue Grafton and Patricia Cornwell.

“*Ahab’s Wife*. Contemporary Rewritings of Melvillean Masculinities”

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Sena Jeter Naslund’s novel *Ahab’s Wife* (1999) pays homage to the great American classic *Moby Dick* (1851). Unlike Melville’s all-male novel, however, the protagonist of Naslund’s text is a woman, Una Spenser, whose relation to one of the characters in *Moby Dick* is explicit both in the title of the novel, and in its very attractive first line: “Captain Ahab was neither my first husband nor my last” (Naslund, 2000, p. 1). Una is a strong, sensual, and intellectually independent who, looking for knowledge and experiences goes out to sea disguised as a cabin boy. Naslund, however, makes it a point to show that Una’s character is not an anachronistic projection with no correspondence in mid nineteenth Century American womanhood. To prove her point, Naslund introduces in her narrative two historical women, Margaret Fuller, who stated “Let them be sea-captains - if they will!”, and Maria Mitchell, the first woman to discover a comet using a telescope. The psychological fortitude of Una, her pragmatic spirit of survival, and her realistic flexibility in front of moral dilemmas are moreover, counterbalanced by the much weaker personalities of most male characters around her, whose shortcomings and weaknesses often derive from obsessions motivated by either fear of, or actual acknowledgements of, personal failure. Thus, when after having been stove by a whale and being left stranded in an open boat, Una and the rest of the crew start eating human flesh, she can actually do it there and then but, most importantly, can justify herself later on for having done so. In contrast to her, her co-survivor and future husband Kit goes mad and becomes violent against her, others, and himself, in his inability to accept having become a cannibal. Their common friend Giles, another survivor of the tragedy, ends up killing himself so as not to have to live with the remembrance of the taste of human blood. Unwilling to expiate religious guilt with either death or madness, Una accepts that “It is an imperfect world, love” (2000, p. 281), and cannot condemn herself because “human beings are morally complex, women as well as men, and I must live with that” (2000, p. 387). In the same way, when later

on in the novel Una is confronted with a man who cannot forgive himself because he has practiced incest with his own sister, Una empowers him to forgive himself by showing she has forgiven her own cannibalism.

The dichotomy between the maturity of Una, who states “I liked myself” (Naslund, 2000, p. 462) and the Manichaeian vision of life of the male characters in the novel, which tends to paralyze them and / or remove them from the midst of the social fabric, reminds us of Nina Baym’s analysis of Nathaniel Hawthorne’s characters: “he created male protagonists who suffer from isolation, alienation, and self-absorption; women offer sociality, self-forgetfulness, connection...” (Byam, 1982, p. 58). Richly made of interconnections between fictitious and historical characters, Naslund’s novel actually forces a meeting between Nathaniel Hawthorne and Una Spenser, after which, the reader is invited to deduce, Hawthorne feels inspired to create the character of Hester Prynne and also to name his own daughter Una. The binary opposition between woman as flexible, sensual, and even hedonistic versus man as alienated from himself and tragic with the world is best embodied in both Una and Captain Ahab. When he states “In no corner of the earth have I found a happiness that lasts” she swiftly responds “Nor an unhappiness!” (Naslund, 2000, p. 478)

If Nina Baym had attributed the flexibility of Hawthorne’s female characters to the surprising protofeminism of the writer, in this paper we would like to connect the flexibility of Naslund’s protagonist to Herman Melville’s needs and abilities to question some of the major preoccupations which informed mid-nineteenth century American masculinity.

The first of these preoccupations is the Transcendentalist approach to life, which tended to deny the ambiguities of human nature and of the universe attempting to smooth them up in a narrative of radical optimism to which, as we know, Herman Melville screamed “No! In Thunder!” As a matter of fact, in his writings, Melville celebrates the joys of life but, at the same time, he also embraces the contradictions and complexities of human psyche exploring what he celebrated in Hawthorne as “blackness, ten times black” (Melville, 1994, p. 2617).

A second issue is the Christian dogmatism of the first half of the nineteenth century expressed in *Ahab’s Wife* in the discourse of guilt and of fear of God in the Quaker tradition best represented by Una’s father: “*If thy hand offend thee... cut it off!*” (Naslund, 2000, p. 569). In her rejection of such morbid religiosity, Una’s spiritual

curiosity is better pleased first with the Universalist church in their belief that one is saved, but later on, even more so, by the Unitarians, who grant her freedom of thought, do not dictate her actions, and celebrate nature and the most physical aspects of the human experience.

The third concern is what both Leslie Fiedler and Toni Morrison have labeled fear or even horror of no civilization, of boundarilessness, of powerlessness, of freedom in front of the unknown and the uncivilized, i.e. of nature itself. In Naslund's novel, it is true that Una does once look at Captain Ahab and asks herself in fear: "Who was this captain? A male version of myself?" (Naslund, 2000, p. 291). But the novel emphasizes that the major difference between the two characters is that she can, and does, surrender to nature whereas his inability to do the same leads to his self-destructive obsession to conquer nature in the shape of a white whale. As opposed to the masculinist dreams of control through "civilization" behind the discourses of Manifest Destiny or of nineteenth-century American capitalism that so much did upset Melville, in Naslund's novel the fictionalized Margaret Fuller comfortably writes: "And it is the way of women. We allow each other our individuality. We do not insist that we dominate or control" (2000, p. 592).

Ahab's Wife offers, thus, a critique of nineteenth-century traditional white American masculinity. Sena Jeter Naslund presents masculine emotional and psychological shortcomings with much understanding and with great awareness of the major discourses which shaped the received notion of what it was to be male in Captain Ahab's times. We believe that the spirit of the well-informed and contextualized critique of masculinity in Sena Jeter Naslund's *Ahab's Wife* is only facilitated by the same spirit in the critique of masculinity evidenced in Melville's original text. We believe that *Moby Dick* explored some of the discourse of American nineteenth-Century masculinity within the master narratives in philosophy, religion, patriotism, and entrepreneurship, in order to analyze and diagnose the major shortcomings in the construction of nineteenth-Century American masculinity which so much determined the construction of the nation and affected the lives of American women and men.

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"The Demystification of 'Techno-muscular' Masculinity in Bobbie Ann Mason's *In Country* and Jayne Anne Phillips' *Machine Dreams*"

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Both Jayne Anne Phillips and Bobbie Ann Mason have been considered members of the Vietnam Generation and, along with most of the baby boomers, came of age during the Vietnam War. This historical circumstance has branded at least two of the fictional worlds they have created—the worlds of *Machine Dreams* in the case of the former and that of *In Country* in the case of the latter. One of the most recurrent symbols in Mason's *In Country* is Bruce Springsteen's *Born in the U.S.A.* On its front cover, the singer is seen "facing the flag, as though studying it, trying to figure out its meaning" (Mason, 1987, p. 236). In the same fashion, both Mason and Phillips scrutinize the nation in an attempt to make sense of the traumatic event that had left a toll of 58,000 U.S. soldiers dead, some 120,000 of those who returned having committed suicide by 1990 (Boose, 1993, p. 603), and the socially complicated and politically expensive problem of having to tackle the problems of adjustment suffered by a majority of the veterans. The aforementioned novels, written in 1984 and 1985 respectively, offer a panoramic vista of U.S. society from the end of WWII to the aftermath of the Vietnam War. While Phillips describes the hegemonic discourses that lead the U.S. into the imperial war in Vietnam, Mason concentrates on the devastating effects of those

discourses on the generation that fought the war. Both writers highlight the way in which the crisis of the discourse of technological progress, on the one hand, and the social and personal dissatisfaction brought about by the imposition of a hegemonic normative family during the 1950s, on the other, problematized the process of subject formation for a generation of American men. They also aimed at redefining the traditional notions of self and nation, which had come to be regarded as having led to the atrocities witnessed and committed in Vietnam.

In both novels, the conditions for trauma are identified precisely in the discourses that equate a certain prototype of masculinity with the normative national identity. Thus, both novels put the blame for such terrible toll on the belief which establishes that American boys make their transition into male adulthood through the rite of initiation of participating in the war of their generation: ‘I don’t get it,’ Sam said. ‘If there wasn’t a war for fifty years and two whole generations didn’t have to fight, do you mean there should have been a war for them? Is that why we have wars —so guys won’t miss out?’” (Mason, 1987, pp. 86-87). The inadequacy of such discourse was most forcefully felt when the continuous line of victories and triumphal masculinity was unexpectedly and against all odds interrupted in Vietnam, depriving the males of the baby boom generation of their symbolic transition into hegemonic maturity, and therefore leaving them “unfinished”: as Sam’s mother would say in *In Country*, veterans—and by extension the soldier understood as the most effective symbol of hegemonic masculine potency— became a “case of arrested development” (1987, p. 234).

The felt incompleteness of the males in the novels analyzed translates into their failure when faced with the social duty of fulfilling their roles as fathers and providers within the traditional family unit. The disruption of the line of normative masculinity problematizes the process of subject formation for the men of the Vietnam Generation. But far from criticizing men for their “shortcomings”, Mason and Phillips empathize with those men and, instead, their novels question the hegemonic discourses which set up the standard of masculine perfection in comparison to which men define their individual identities, sometimes at a great personal cost. The novels at hand articulate their criticism around the way the U.S. society tends to accept unquestioningly the fact that technology brings human progress and that the only sound social organization is the nuclear family. Such a narrative of national identity envisages men as the able users and

creators of the technology which brings about the well-being he, as head of family, is in charge of providing to the members of the family unit.

According to Slotkin, the frontier experience had inscribed in the American imagination the moral truth that “violence and savage war were the necessary instruments of American progress” (Slotkin, 1993, p. 171). Thus, violence on the racially and / or culturally “Other”, under the appearance of a morally acceptable civilizing—or democratizing— effort, was inscribed as one of the principles that defines the national identity from its origins. For that project, the United States counted on the most sophisticated technology ever displayed by an army, a technology that was the result of an unbroken line of progress that gave unquestionable evidence to the fact that the founding of the United States had served as harbinger of a new World Order it was their destiny to promote and defend. Mason and Phillips denounce the failure of the model of national identity based on the blind belief in progress as a source of well being and civilization by both voicing their fear that technology, more than the specialized knowledge possessed by men, had become the subterfuge used by men to avoid confronting more complex aspects of their existence and by presenting technology as ultimately inefficient and destructive and, in this fashion, questioning the principle that equates technology and human progress.

The second belief, central to the construction both of the national and the masculine identity, these novels question is the one which identifies the normative family as the only possible organizational unit in society. Both Phillips and Mason identify the hegemonic nuclear family as the perpetuator of destructive national convictions and discourses. The family is portrayed, thus, and as one of the originators of the conditions for trauma. By doing this Mason and Phillips establish links with the 1970s belief that “the typical American family ought to be considered one of contributing factors in the war and, perhaps, western militarism in general” (Berg & Rowe, 1991, p. 3), instead of echoing the belief, common in the 80s, when their work was published, that the national failure in Vietnam would not have taken place had the nuclear family not been under attack from the New Left activists.

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"Representations of Masculinity in American Detective Novels"

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For many, the hardboiled American detective novel begins with Dashiell Hammett's *The Maltese Falcon* in 1930, and is consolidated with the publication of Chandler's first Philip Marlowe novel, *The Big Sleep*, in 1939. In "The Simple Art of Murder," published in 1944, Chandler explains what the hardboiled private detective should be like:

... down these mean streets a man must go who is not himself mean, who is neither tarnished nor afraid. The detective in this kind of story must be such a man. He is the hero, he is everything. He must be a complete man and a common man and yet an unusual man. He must be, to use a rather weathered phrase, a man of honour, by instinct, by inevitability, without thought of it, and certainly without saying it. He must be the best man in his world and a good enough man for any world (Chandler, 1954, p. 198).

As Chandler himself implies, this model is basically that of the medieval knight of courtly romance, a twentieth century, rather bedraggled and besmirched, raincoat clad

St George. He is required to be brave, strong, skilled with weapons, loyal, clever and silent. He must also, of course, protect the weak and vulnerable, especially women, assuming they deserve it. As Chandler's novels make clear, there are all too often women who do not deserve consideration, just as witches and gossips were shunned in earlier times. A woman must be a virginal and pure, or she is beneath contempt.

Although this model of masculinity might seem acceptable to some, it should not be forgotten that it is a model based, primarily, on violence and, secondly, on a binary opposition. Woman is the 'other.' The masculine model can only exist in opposition to the supposedly feminine characteristics of cowardice, weakness, lack of dexterity, disloyalty, stupidity, evil cunning, and garrulity.

As well as reinforcing traditional misogynistic representations of femininity, the hard-boiled detective, in his need to construct himself in opposition to the 'other' is also racist and homophobic. The black population of Los Angeles, where Philip Marlowe lives and works is beneath his interest. In *Farewell, My Lovely* Marlowe witnesses the murder of a black bar manager by a white man. Far from attempting to detain the murderer, Marlowe's investigations lead him to the true villain of the novel, a woman. It emerges that the murderer is merely another victim of womanly wiles. The murdered black man is forgotten. Joel Cairo, meanwhile, one of the villains in Dashiell Hammett's *The Maltese Falcon* is characterised as effeminate:

Effie Perine rose and went into the outer office. Spade took off his hat and sat in his chair. The girl returned with an engraved card – MR JOEL CAIRO.

‘This guy is queer,’ she said.

‘In with him, then, darling,’ said Spade. (Hammett, 1982)

Not surprisingly some of the later generation of American detective fiction took Hammett's and Chandler's model to its logical extreme. Mickey Spillane's Mike Hammer and Tiger Mann novels are unashamedly sexist, racist and homophobic, as well as being among the most violent of the genre. Spillane, unlike Hammett and Chandler who were politically on the left, is an extreme right-wing reactionary obsessed with preventing the infiltration of his beloved United States by communists, criminals and perverts, against whom any means are justified. Other authors, such as Ross MacDonald, though less extreme than Spillane, undeviatingly follow Chandler's definition of what a hero should be.

In 1973 Robert B. Parker published the first of a long series of detective novels featuring Spenser, a character closely modelled on Philip Marlowe, his name being, like Marlowe's, that of a sixteenth century English poet. Despite Parker's enthusiasm for Chandler – he finished the latter's uncompleted novel *Poodle Springs* and wrote a sequel to *The Big Sleep* – he very quickly introduces modifications to the now conventional model of masculinity epitomised by the private detective. The second Spenser novel, *God Save the Child*, published in 1974, introduces the woman who is to become Spenser's life-long partner, Susan Silverman. A professional, independent psycho-therapist, Susan Silverman is neither virginal and pure, nor beneath the contempt of the ardent Spenser. She becomes invaluable, both for his peace of mind, and as an ally in solving crime. In 1976, *Promised Land* introduces Hawk, a black version of Spenser, who becomes his closest friend and invaluable side-kick in times of crisis. Many years later, in *Paper Doll*, published in 1993, Lee Farrell, a gay police detective, joins the company of barmen, lawmen, lawyers, tycoons and criminals who make up Spenser's growing army of friends and acquaintances on whom he can call in times of trouble.

Despite this, Spenser remains true to a traditional model of masculinity: he idolises Susan Silverman, but lives alone, being incapable of sharing a flat with anyone else, he drinks a lot, he enjoys violence and uses it to resolve problems, he is faithful to his personal code requiring him to be brave, strong, skilled with weapons, loyal, clever, a man of his word, and largely silent. Part of the problem lies in the genre itself which requires that there be an all-powerful protagonist to whom all other characters are necessarily subordinate. The fact that the most important secondary characters are a woman and a black man ironically underlines their subordinate positions.

The problem, then, lies not only in the model of masculinity represented by the hard-boiled detective, but in the genre itself. More recent writers such as Walter Mosley, James Sallis and George P. Pelecanos have pushed the literary model to its limits in order to examine the gender model. All three writers have created detectives who are not really detectives at all, and are also either black or from minority communities. Walter Mosley's Easy Rawlins holds various jobs, from being a school caretaker to clandestinely owning a block of flats in a white neighbourhood. He is asked to investigate simply because he gains a reputation for being able to help out. James Sallis's Lew Griffin holds down many jobs, from debt collector to university lecturer,

but spends his time hunting for a variety of missing persons. George P. Pelecanos's Nick Stefanos is of Greek origin who earns a living as a barman, and like Rawlins, is an investigator at the request of friends and acquaintances. All three drink far too much but, unlike Spenser or Marlowe, they know it. Indeed, their alcoholism is recognised for the illness it is. They almost never solve their cases, turning the genre, which relies on the satisfactory resolution of the mystery, upside down. None of them are capable of sustaining lasting close relationships, particularly with women and all three consider themselves to be failures.

This more recent model of masculinity provided by Mosely, Sallis and Pelecanos is not concerned with offering a particularly useful alternative to Chandler's. Nevertheless it represents an important step forward. The hard-boiled detective of Hammett, Chandler, Spillane, MacDonald and Parker is revealed as empty, contradictory and unbelievable. The first step that the hard-boiled detective must make if he is to redeem himself is to recognise the error of his ways. His hard drinking is not tough, it is a sickness. He is not, and cannot, be a superman, nor is it to be expected that he will always succeed in solving his cases. He has a problem with the way he relates to the rest of society, particularly women, and he needs to do something about it. Rawlins, Griffin and Stefanos know this. It is a beginning.

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VII Congreso de SAAS, Jaen – 16-18 March 2005

Panel: "Masculinities and Gender Relations in Contemporary US Women's Literature"

Participan: Dra. Àngels Carabí, Dr. Rodrigo Andrés, Dra. Leonor Acosta, Dr. Jeroen Lievens

“Masculinities deconstructed: Rikki Ducornet’s reinvention of the male Bildungsroman”

Leonor Acosta

University of Cádiz

In some cases, the narrative genre of the Bildungsroman proves to be the perfect frame for the confrontation between the sexes and the diverse workings of power inherent in it. This is the case of Rikki Ducornet who creates significant male characters who must engage themselves in a difficult process of acquiring their proper identities in confrontation with the roles imposed over them. Ducornet explores the issue of masculinity and relates its codification to the concepts of civilization, progress, discovery and territorial expansion in her novel *Phosphor in Dreamland* (1995). By means of a juxtaposition of texts placed on different ontological levels this novel entails a profound critique of the Spanish colonization and devastation of a fictional Caribbean island (Birdland).

“De-ethnicizing ethnic masculinities? : the case of Fae Myenne Ng”

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The decades following the Civil Rights Movement in the United States witnessed an outpouring of excellent literary works written from within different ethnic communities, such as the African-American, Chicano, Asian-American, and Native American ones. Those literary texts often had an agenda that included political aspects such as self-dignifying, more social visibility, internal cohesion and, above all, the contestation of stereotypes widely circulated by and among mainstream society. Contemporary women-of-color writers, often authors of texts that sold better than those of their fellow male writers, were crucial agents in this process of self-affirmation. One of the aspects women writers chose to explore in their novels, plays, and poems, is the role of men within their communities. This perspective has often proved necessary, given the consistency with which White American society has traditionally distorted all

masculinities other than white. As a matter of fact, both popular and highbrow White-American representations have treated those masculinities exclusively as an “ethnic” phenomenon. Distortions have been particularly acute with the case of Asian and Asian-American masculinities, time and again stereotyped as “feminized” and set in opposition to Anglo-American notions of hegemonic virility. Over the last four decades, Chinese-American literature in general, and the one written by women in particular, has offered radically new perspectives on masculinity from within different Chinese communities in the United States. But given the identity-politics emphasis of the first generation of Chinese-American writers to “make” it in the American literary scene in the decades of the 1970s and 1980s those representations have still analyzed male characters as determined by their ethnicity. The decade of the 1990s, however, produced a new paradigm of thought which led to the recognition that no American identity is non-ethnic. Along the line of this perception, a new generation of writers has proceeded to analyze the masculinity of some male characters within the frame of their individuality and not emphasizing racial, ethnic or social overdeterminations. This paper explores how, in her 1993 masterpiece *Bone*, by now already a classic of contemporary American literature, writer Fae Myenne Ng presents some Chinese and Chinese-American male characters. Our hypothesis is that Ng’s impressive first work offers not only a transition between two worlds, the Asian-American and the American one, but also a transition between literary depictions of male characters as ethnically marked to one that moves beyond racial definitions.

“Key Spaces? Gender and Closure in Lynne Tillman’s *No Lease on Life*”

Jeroen Lievens

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Neither space nor gender belong to a realm of pre-given essences; rather, both are socially and culturally construed artifacts. Space produces, performs, and perpetuates the codes of culturally dominant masculinities and femininities, while at the same time the individual body is constantly shifting or affirming, that is, *negotiating* its position within and towards the spatial relations that locate and define it. Lynne Tillman is a contemporary U.S. writer who invites us to consider the many ways in which space

involves itself in the many forms of thought, action and speech that represent the abundance of human culture.

XXIX AEDEAN Congress, Jaen – diciembre, 2005

Round Table: “Re-reading Masculinities and Sexualities in American Culture and Literatura”

Panel: “US Studies”

Participants: Dra. Àngels Carabí, Sr. Josep M^a Armengol, Sra. Isabel Seguro

Since the late 1960s and early 1970s, feminist scholars have tried to show the relevance of gender -namely, the cultural meanings attached to one’s biological sex- to social and political life. Together with other factors such as race, class, sexuality, age, etc., gender has thus come to be understood as one of the most significant organizing principles of our social lives. Traditionally, gender studies have concentrated on women, which is politically correct. After all, it is women who have long undergone the worst effects of patriarchal power, and so it was women who had to make gender visible as a political category for the first time.

Nevertheless, since the early 1980s several feminist scholars, male and female, have begun to argue how gender describes both women and men. These scholars have shown how masculinity, like femininity, is not a natural given but rather a cultural and historical construct that varies from culture to culture and across time. The study of the social and cultural construction of masculinity has thus given rise to the so-called studies of masculinities, which Harry Brod has defined as “the study of masculinities and male experiences as specific and varying social-cultural-historical formations” (Brod, 1987, p. 40). Challenging traditional (mis)conceptions of masculinity as eternal and universal, masculinity studies has shown how masculinity, like femininity, is a specific gendered construction that was culturally constructed and can, therefore, be culturally de-constructed and questioned as well.

In order to illustrate the cultural construction of masculinity as well as its effects on men’s lives, much masculinity scholarship has focused on the analysis of male sexuality. Masculinity scholars (see, for example, Segal; Kimmel; Beneke) have indeed shown how male sexuality, like female sexuality, is a gendered construction. As masculinity anthropologist David Gilmore has noted, sexuality is used as a means of proving masculinity in most cultures around the globe. In many cultures worldwide, men appear to seek sex as a form of asserting their manhood and virility, rather than as a

form of achieving reciprocal pleasure and intimacy (Gilmore, 1990). This also seems to apply to contemporary American culture. As one American boy told feminist researcher Lillian Rubin, part of the attraction of sex is “the conquest...and what you...tell the guys at school the next day” (Rubin, qtd. in Kimmel, 2000, p. 222). As in many other cultures, then, sexuality seems to remain a clearly gendered behavior in contemporary American culture as well.

Questioning the widespread cultural (mis)conception of male sexuality as a test of manhood, however, several masculinity scholars (see, for example, Segal; Kimmel; Beneke) have shown how it is both possible and desirable to rethink dominant gendered notions of sexuality. Since ideas about male (hetero)sexuality remain inseparable from cultural concepts of masculinity, rethinking men’s sexualities will require questioning masculinities. However difficult, change in the gendered meanings surrounding male sexuality seems both feasible and advisable. And (American) culture and literature might contribute to it. As Teresa De Lauretis (De Lauretis, 1987, p. 1) has argued, both gender and sexuality are constructed through representations. It follows, therefore, that literature, as (a) representation, may contribute to rethinking both masculinity and (male) (hetero)sexuality.

In line with these main arguments, then, the round table “Rereading Masculinities and Sexualities in American Culture and Literature” aimed to explore the construction, as well as the possible de-construction, of masculinities and (male) sexualities in American culture and literature. The first contribution to the table, by Josep Maria Armengol, focused on the analysis of the re-presentation of masculinity and male sexuality in “Winterkill,” one of the short stories in the collection *Rock Springs* (1987) by the contemporary American writer Richard Ford. Armengol showed how Ford’s “Winterkill” seems to explore and subvert from innovative perspectives the conventional view of sexuality as a symbol of virility and manhood. The story is told by Les Snow, a thirty-seven-year-old narrator. A lower-class man, Les has lost his job and spends most of his time watching T.V. at home or drinking in bars with his wheelchair-constrained friend Troy Burnham, who is sexually disabled. It is precisely while Les and Troy are having a drink together in a bar that they meet Nola Foster, a widow who is described as “not a bad-looking woman at all” (Ford, 1987, p. 150). After having a few drinks together, Nola and the two men decide to go together on a late-night fishing excursion by a river.

Ford's story, then, concerns itself with a male-male-female (erotic) triangle. And, predictably, the triangle involves two men engaged in a homosocial relation of rivalry over a woman. As has been argued, male (hetero)sexuality usually acts as a form of male homosociality, a way to prove one's masculinity, especially before and against other males. In this sense, then, male sexuality often becomes extremely competitive, as men use sexuality to prove not only that they are manly, but also that they are *manlier* than other men. In "Winterkill," Troy and Les also compete against each other to have sex with Nola and thus prove their superior masculinity.

Troy resorts to violence and stereotypical male behavior to try to seduce Nola, showing off his aggressive fishing skills. In particular, Troy tries to catch Nola's attention effecting quick, jerky movements with his fishing rod, which suggests a phallic symbol. Nevertheless, Nola, like most women in *Rock Springs*, is not keen on violent sports like fishing and pays, therefore, no attention to Troy. Troy's phallic rod fails not only to catch Nola's attention, who thus moves away from the traditional passive role of woman as sexual trophy for the phallic male, but also to retrieve any fish from the water. In a "typical Ford twist on male adventure," Troy ends up catching not fish but a dead deer, which seems to symbolize the defeated, hapless man (Leder, 2000, p. 111). In effect, the dead deer seems to stand for Troy himself, who, given the irony of his catch, finds himself the object of ridicule from both Les and Nola. Disappointed and ridiculed, then, Troy can do nothing but burst into tears as though "it was him who had washed up there and was finished" (Ford, 1987, p. 166).

Les, on the other hand, tries to diminish the masculinity of his sexual competitor by insisting on his sexual disability. As has been argued, sexuality has traditionally been used as a proof of masculinity. Because males often see sexuality as a primary means of proving masculinity, men, as masculinity scholar Harry Brod (Brod, 1992, p. 153) has argued, tend to feel pressured to perform adequately in sex. Failure to do so inevitably threatens masculine identity. Thus, men focus on sexual performance, particularly erection and penetration, as the main features of sex, which leads to a phallic conception of male sexuality. Trying to diminish the virility of his friend, then, Les introduces Troy to Nola as an impotent man who "can't do very much" (Ford, 1987, p. 151). Troy suffers a paralysis below his waist and so cannot have erections. Thus, Les explains to Nola that Troy "does not look exactly like a whole man" and that, probably, he has not been with a woman for fifteen years (1987, pp. 156-157).

Nevertheless, Richard Ford's story seems to question conventional phallogentric conceptions of sexuality, especially the traditional view of sex as a proof of masculinity. After all, Troy ends up seducing Nola despite his sexual disability. Although Troy is physically disabled, Les himself acknowledges that Troy is "both frail and strong at once," since he had been "an excellent wrestler" and could still break "his spinning rod into two pieces with only his hands." Even more important is the fact that Troy "always has enthusiasm" and "a good heart" (Ford, 1987, pp. 151, 167 and 152). Because of these positive attributes, then, Troy ends up seducing Nola.

Troy's final sexual intercourse with Nola is not explicitly described, as it takes place off-stage. At story's end, we only see Nola enter Troy's bedroom and "close the door behind" (Ford, 1987, p. 168). The end of the story thus seems particularly subversive as well. Instead of describing *the* sexual scene explicitly, Richard Ford asks the reader to imagine *different* possibilities for alternative, non-phallic forms of sexuality. Rather than simply provide the representation of Troy's sexual relationship with Nola, then, Ford asks the reader to play an active role in envisioning possible re-writings of heterosexuality beyond the traditionally phallic terms. In Ford's story, the phallogentric conception of sexuality, like Troy's phallic rod, is thus broken into pieces. Ford's text, then, seems to prove particularly subversive. After all, male sexuality, as has been argued, is closely related to gender and masculinity. It follows, therefore, that innovative re-visions of male sexuality like Richard Ford's could contribute as well to questioning dominant patriarchal notions of masculinity.

While Armengol focused on the analysis of white masculinities and sexualities, the other two contributions to the round table, by Dr. Àngels Carabí and Isabel Seguro, explored the connections between masculinities and sexualities, on the one hand, and race and ethnicity, on the other. Focusing on African-American and Asian-American literature, respectively, Carabí and Seguro showed how both masculinity and sexuality are inflected by ethnicity in American culture and literature. Carabí explored the ways in which African-American author Toni Morrison rewrites traditional constructions of black masculinity and how, in this process, Morrison questions and contributes to redefining the ideologies that sustain social power structures marked by unequal notions of gender and sexuality. Carabí's presentation centered on the analysis of two male characters in the works of Toni Morrison: Milkman Dead in *Song of Solomon* (1977) and Paul D in *Beloved* (1988). Both men, Carabí argued, undergo successful trips to free

themselves from individualistic and self-centered patriarchal notions of traditional masculinity. If Milkman's search ends with a promising and individual liberating flight, in *Beloved* Morrison suggests alternative ways of acting manly through non-normative and nurturing heterosexual love relationships.

In *Song of Solomon*, freedom, for the "young" and immature Milkman, is linked to individualistic practices and to materialistic aims. Before his trip South, Milkman, Carabí indicated, is a selfish man, unconcerned about the people who love him and the pain he might cause onto them, especially onto the women of his life. When faced by the shocking complexity of his mother's personal story, he non-empathically, dreams her dead; he interferes with the love-life of his sister First Corinthians, assuming the traditional role of the man in the house to "protect" his family's reputation; he, too, betrays his loving aunt Pilate by breaking into her house to steal a sack which he believes contains gold; he ends his twelve-year relationship with his girlfriend Hagar with a simple note of "thank you and good bye". Protected by the immunity provided by his upper-middle class social status, he remains ignorant of the racism that affects the lives of the black people of the Blood Bank. When his childhood friend Guitar gives signs of radical activism to counteract white attacks against blacks, Milkman's reaction shows an absolute lack of interest.

Like Macon Dead, his assimilated father, Milkman tries to be a "white" black, an emblem of (white) America's patriarchy. Milkman, at this stage, Carabí suggested, embodies the characteristics of (white) traditional masculinity stated by psychologists Brannon and David in their book, *The Forty-nine Percent Majority*: 1) men cannot be passive, nor vulnerable and must not take care of others; 2) men must be important, have power and be superior to others; 3) they must be tough, self-sufficient and hide their emotions; 4) men must be aggressive, face risk situations and use violence. If the characteristics of normative masculinity are demanding for white men, they are even more problematic to be accomplished by black men. According to critics like Franz Fanon, James Baldwin and Toni Morrison, black men's masculinity is a subordinated masculinity, constructed to reinforce white males' superiority. As a consequence, Milkman, like his father, has to counteract the notions of non-identity enforced by racism to prove he is the subject of patriarchy, to prove he is a man.

This he will try to achieve in his trip south in search for the gold which, he believes, will lead to his independence and freedom. Yet his journey will provide a

different vision of himself and of his male gendered construction. His encounter with the members of the Southern community who knew his father brings him a dignified vision of the silenced history of his paternal family. Nurtured by these new learnt community values and by the information of his genealogy revealed in the song of Solomon sung by the children in the streets of Shalimar, Milkman questions his previous non-relational masculine behavior. Aware of his cultural legacy, he is ready to reclaim the dignity of the past of African American slaves, especially the legacy of his ancestor Solomon, a wise man who could fly back to Africa. But, when men “fly”, as Morrison has stated, “somebody is left behind”. Moved by Ryna’s painful lament echoed by the mountains -the woman abandoned by Solomon in his flight to Africa- Milkman acknowledges the cruel way in which he left his girlfriend Hagar. Taking responsibility over his wrongdoings and feeling reborn as a member of the African American community, he is mature enough to abandon his selfish and masculine ego. It is in his love-making with Sweet, a very tender and smiling prostitute, that Milkman experiences the pleasure of giving. Once Milkman frees himself from the individualistic and hierarchical codes of patriarchy, he feels light. So light that, when jumping off a hill to give his body –now his only possession- to his killing friend Guitar, he is able to fly.

Milkman’s evolution towards freedom anticipates Paul D’s more complex journey towards the creation of alternative masculinities. In *Beloved*, Morrison offers highly suggestive nurturing forms of manhood articulated in non-normative heterosexual relationships. By doing so, the author contributes to redefining fundamental social patriarchal structures -like marriage, family and sexuality- which have been severely marked by gender inequalities.

Beloved’s story is framed during slavery, a time where notions of manhood were denied to black males. Colored men (and women) were robbed of any form of ownership over their bodies, their desires, their will, and of the possibility to build up family structures. It was white culture that defined notions of family and of manhood. A man, in white culture, was supposed to be the head of the house, the protector and the provider. Yet black men were not entitled to such foundations since black masculinities were, as it has been indicated, second-hand male identities, constructed to insure white men’s superiority. As a result of this, Paul D’ sense of manhood is a damaged one. His distorted nonidentity and the unmanly vision that he has of himself are rooted in the violations, the sexual abuses that he suffered in prison and, especially, in

Schoolteacher's perverse humiliations which made him feel "something less than a chicken sitting in the sun on a tub" (Morrison, 1988, p. 72).

First a runaway slave and, like many post-war black men, a wanderer, his re-encounter with Sethe (the woman who he was fond of in the Sweet Home plantation) awakens in him the desire to settle down and create a family. When Paul D enters Sethe's house, he assumes, erroneously, that he can live his manhood by acting as protector-provider, the roles that white patriarchy has denied him. His first act of protection is to violently chase the strange presence of a ghost which he believes haunts the house. Ignoring Sethe's and her daughter's desires, Paul D takes command. Yet what he misses (and does not ask) is that, in Sethe's household, both the mother and her daughter feel comforted by the presence of the baby's spirit. Annoyed by the fact that Sethe has done it all by herself, "No man? You were here by yourself?" (Morrison, 1988, p. 10) -including giving birth to Denver while escaping from slavery- Paul D feels not needed. It is his hunger to inscribe his masculine discourse of ownership what makes him tell Sethe: "I want you pregnant. Would you do that for me?" (1988, p.129). But Sethe ignores his request and her decision makes Paul feel diminished and vulnerable in his maleness: "There was a family somehow and he was not the head of it" (1988, p.132). Terrified of Sethe's power after learning about her killing of her two-year old daughter to save her from being taken back to slavery, Paul D leaves the house.

To change Paul D's traditional codes of masculinity requires moving "on a slow motion" (to borrow sociologist Lynne Segal's title of her book). His evolution towards a non-normative and non-hierarchical heterosexual relationship is beautifully narrated by Morrison. Paul D modifies his traditional notions of maleness when he is able to meditate over and assimilate the intimacies he shared with a magnificent man, Sixo, a slave he met at the plantation.

Sixo, who ends his life being burned up by the whites, was a "wild man" who showed respect for the living and for the dead, for the natural and the supernatural, who "went among trees at night for dancing to keep his bloodlines open" (Morrison, 1988, p. 25). A man who "stopped speaking English because there was no future in it"; who told stories to the men that "made them cry-laugh" (1988, p. 25), and who walked for thirty miles back and forth to the plantation to see the woman he loved for an hour because, as he tells Paul D, "The pieces I am she gather them and give them back to me in all the right order" (1988, p. 272).

It is Paul D's reflecting on Sixo's notions of manliness, a manhood uncolonized by the dominant culture of the white slaveholder and in tune with ideals of African maleness, what makes Paul D look at himself through Sixo's eyes. He then feels profoundly ashamed of not having understood Sethe's painful deed. His awareness to the fact that Mr. Garner's "modelic" manhood is made superior at the expense of the *quality* of his ownership over black people, as Deborah Ayer Sitter indicates, makes Paul D ready to free himself from white hierarchical notions of manhood and to incorporate alternative ways of acting as a man in relations of marriage and family. He, then, is able to help Sethe to re-member herself, having been guided by a man (Sixo) who learned to re-piece himself with the help of a woman. Paul D's return to 124 coincides with the end of Sethe's personal cleansing ritual. Sethe has relived the past of slavery and can now re-find her "best self" in the healing hands of a masculine and loving man.

Finally, Isabel Seguro's presentation on Asian-American masculinities began by emphasizing the coalitional nature of the term "Asian American," traditionally equated to Americans of Chinese and Japanese descent for being, originally, the most numerous Asian groups to migrate to the United States. Seguro's contribution concentrated, therefore, upon the representations of Chinese American literature and culture, since these were later applied to the rest of the Asian communities in the country.

The other point which was underlined is the interconnections between gender and sexual discourses, on the one hand, and racial discourses, on the other, working together hand in hand in the formation of images of Asian American men and women. The images that are formed out of these interconnections are, furthermore, related to the history of Asian immigration to the United States, together with Western colonial and imperial enterprises in the East, as noted by scholars such as Elaine H. Kim.

Consequently, the East has been personified as effeminate and submissive which is, in turn, reflected in the ways Asian peoples have been depicted. As a result, Asian men have been constructed as emasculated whereas the women have been hyper-feminized. The East, overall, is subordinated to the West, embodied in the figure of the white, middle-class, heterosexual male.

However, the Orient and, therefore, Asian men, have been seen also as a menace. At this point, Seguro made reference to Shirley Geok-lin Lim's concept of the "Ambivalent American." The term refers to the existence of simultaneous stereotypes,

which may even contradict each other, around a particular (ethnic) group. According to the socio-political conditions at a given time, one of these may be enforced whilst the other(s) remain(s) latent. Thus, as long as Chinese coolies provided the necessary labor force for constructing the infrastructure of the country (railroads, fisheries, etc.), they would be considered as unthreatening. The menacing images of Chinese emerged when their presence was interpreted as endangering jobs for whites.

This was reflected in legislation. First, with the Page Act (1875), which aimed specifically at preventing the entrance of Chinese women into the United States. The effect was an unbalance between male and female members in the Chinatowns formed in major American cities, as exemplified by what came to be known as bachelor communities. Furthermore, Asians, and Chinese in particular, were relegated to certain types of jobs so as to prevent competition for white workers. Chinese Americans, thus, became associated with the feminine, the domestic sphere due to the services they were providing: restaurants, servants, and above all, laundries. The highlight of such discriminatory legislation arrived with the Chinese Exclusion Act (1882).

Asian American men were disempowered by being emasculated in the public sphere. An example of how the “Ambivalent American” functions is seen with the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor (Dec. 7, 1941), turning the Japanese American population into the enemy of the people versus the Chinese American population. Officially, the “Yellow Peril” was dissipated with the end of World War II and the conversion of Japan from an enemy into an important ally in the Pacific basin. From there on, another stereotype was created: the model minority.

According to this image, Asian Americans are portrayed as hard-working (establishing links with the mainstream American work ethic), straight A students, law-abiding and meek. This kind of stereotype reflects the Asian American attempts to assimilate within mainstream society, following the rules by which to accomplish the American Dream. It is also a stereotype that, due to its assimilationist nature, does not question the system and therefore serves as a means of constraining the Asian American community by dominant culture.

One of the ways Asian men attempt to integrate and/or assimilate is depicted in their relationships with Caucasian women. To get involved with a white woman, a representative of dominant culture, is a means by which to recover their manhood. However, according to a racial discourse, the Asian man is subordinated to the white

woman. These kinds of tensions and the constraints of the model minority concept are explored in two plays chosen by the participant: *Bondage* (1992) by David Henry Hwang and *Wonderland* (1999) by Chay Yew.

Bondage is a one-act play that takes place in an S&M parlor in California sometime in the 1990s. There are only two characters, Terri, the dominatrix, and Mark, the client. Both characters wear hoods so that the audience is unaware of their ethnicity. Terri's method of controlling Mark is by ordering him to play subordinate roles in relation to the ones she assumes during their S&M session. First, she puts on a blond wig and tells Mark that he is a Chinese man. The friction between racial and gender discourses is reflected in Mark's initial reaction whilst performing this first role game: "But—you're blonde. I'm—Chinese. It's not easy to know whether it's OK for me to love you" (Hwang, 1992, p. 253).

Along the play both keep changing roles—a fact that emphasizes the performative nature of gender *and* ethnic images. When Terri becomes a black woman and Mark a white man, their role game reveals white men's prejudices concerning the sexuality of black women as tremendously alluring. In another role game Terri becomes a Chinese woman and Mark, once more, a Chinese man whose position is again undermined. As a Chinese American woman, Terri proclaims that she is "not attracted to Asian men" (Hwang, 1992, p. 267) and that "[e]very successful Asian woman walks in on the arm of a white man" (1992, p. 268). The assimilated, model minority Asian man cannot compete with whiteness—the norm to which he will be unable to adjust.

What the play reveals is that Terri chooses the roles with particular care, fantasizing that she has power over men, whereas Mark's demands, as a client, for Terri to play and ask him to play certain ethnic representations is an attempt to overcome his fear of women. Eventually, when both characters take off their hoods and reveal themselves as a white woman and an Asian man, we realize that they have tried to come to terms with the expectations imposed on them by mainstream society according to gender and racial discourses. Along the play they have become aware of the commonalities between racial and gender discourses and that makes them come together to an understanding, deconstructing the ideology of white America.

Chay Yew belongs to the younger generation of Asian American authors concerned with queer writing, "queer" understood, in David Eng's and Alice Hom's words, as "a political practice based on transgression of the normal and normativity

rather than a straight/gay binary of the heterosexual/homosexual identity” (Eng et al., 2003). These writers are more concerned with deconstructing patriarchal values that work as forces of oppression both in Asian American and mainstream American culture. They are not so much concerned with re/constructing or re/representing Asian American womanhood/manhood, but with representing diversity within Asian America.

In his 1999 play *Wonderland*, Yew examines the constraining effects of the model minority image by depicting an Asian American family (consisting of father, mother and son), especially through the father figure. The father is an architect who dreams of designing skyscrapers—a symbol of American progress and modernity, as well as a phallic image of American success. However, his supervisors keep assigning him mall designs —flat buildings which symbolize his subordinate position versus mainstream society and his symbolic emasculation. He follows word by word his supervisors’ instructions concerning the use of building materials, ultimately unquestioning their decisions in order to achieve their approval. When the roof of his work of art, the Wonderland mall, collapses due to the poor quality of the materials used causing the death of sixteen people, he is the one taken responsible for the catastrophe, the scapegoat of the company. The image of the good, model, Asian American citizen changes to that of an untrustworthy element for the security of society.

This Asian American father is further emasculated, not only by the fact that his architectural license is revoked and therefore he is unable to support his family, but also because his only son turns out to be gay. That means that the family’s line dies with this son who will not form a conventional family and who does not desire to pursue a “successful” career such as an engineer or doctor. Instead, he wants to become an actor. Finally, the son ends up working in gay porno films. The final question becomes: “Is that what you got/after all these years/for playing by the book/by the rules?” (Yew, 2002, p. 403).

Both *Bondage* and *Wonderland*, therefore, reflect how certain stereotypes around Asian American masculinity still linger.

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XXIX AEDEAN Congress, Jaen – diciembre, 2005

Round Table: “Masculinity Studies in Practice: Bringing Masculinity Studies into the Classroom”

Panel: “Feminist and Gender Studies”

Participants: Dra. Barbara Ozieblo, Dr. Rodrigo Andrés, Dr. William C. Phillips, Sra. Cristina Alsina Rísquez

“Reading masculinity as privilege in Herman Melville’s stories about the material conditions of writing”

Rodrigo Andrés

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A copyist was no problem. Helen served as his copyist. (Parker 1, 1996, p. 651).

These are not natural silences, that necessary time for renewal, lying fallow, gestation, in the natural cycle of creation. The silences I speak of here are unnatural; the unnatural thwarting of what struggles to come into being, but cannot. In the old, the obvious parallels: when the seed strikes stone; the soil will not sustain; the spring is false; the time is drought or blight or infestation; the frost comes premature (Olsen, 1989).

Melville [...] was groping past the simplicity of Hawthorne’s doctrine of art for artist’s sake. Indeed, what had pleased him in 1850 was shockingly inadequate in early 1856. Hawthorne had been wrong in “the Artist of the Beautiful”: what counted was not, for instance, Shakespeare’s having “thought” of *Macbeth* but his having written it and its having survived. What counted was having

Moby-Dick published, not Melville's having glorified himself by experiencing *Moby-Dick* as a bright conception or as a work that did not need to survive - and to survive in a sufficient number of printed copies "perceptible to mortal senses" (Parker 2, 2002, p. 273).

Herman Melville's short story "Bartleby, the Scrivener" (1853) is often taught as a Biblical allegory, as an analysis of the ethics of capitalism, or as an extended metaphor of Herman Melville's own prerogative as a writer. In this contribution I would like to suggest that it is also possible to approach the text from a masculinity studies perspective. "Bartleby" may then be read and taught as a story that indirectly explores the gendered dimension of the job of the scrivener, i.e., the copyist, and which is informed by Herman Melville's considerations about the gendered dimension of what it was to be a writer in his own immediate context.

In my reading and teaching of the story I actually happen to disagree with David Leverenz, for whom the American Renaissance male writers suffered severe psychological hardships because they saw themselves as deviating from the gender expectations of the type of activity male Brahmins from New England should devote themselves to. According to those expectations, white middle class men should be building America and its institutions, and leaving the profession of literature to a market already taken by what Hawthorne contemptuously referred to as a "mob of scribbling women". In my reading of "Bartleby", Melville shows his uncomfortable awareness that maleness was - even in the America of the early 1850s - a definite privilege if one wanted to become a writer.

Ever since he came back from his long voyage in the Pacific, literature was such a passion for Herman Melville that he could only understand his life and his personal growth as concomitant with writing:

My development has been all within a few years past. I am like one of those seeds taken out of the Egyptian Pyramids, which after being three thousand years a seed and nothing but a seed, being planted in English soil, it developed itself, grew to greenness, and then fell to mould. So I. Until I was twenty-five, I had no development at all. From my twenty-fifth year I date my life. Three weeks have scarcely passed, at any time between then and now, that I have not unfolded within

myself. But I feel that I am now come to the inmost leaf of the bulb, and that shortly the flower must fall to the mould (Melville, in Horth, 1993, p. 193).

This passion required full self, since, according to biographer Hershel Parker, “He could not think of doing anything else with his life besides writing” (Parker 2, 2002, p. 120). For a few years - too few for us Melville lovers - Melville was granted the circumstances of full self for writing. And it was mostly the women around him who made those circumstances possible, as has historically happened around many male writers. Tillie Olsen’s comments about female sacrifice in the enabling of loved male husbands or relatives is pertinent. This denial often happened at the expense of the potential talent of women, which went unexplored and was therefore lost to humanity:

And not only wives: mothers, sisters, daughters, lovers, helper women, secretaries, housekeepers, watchers and warders. Not here the place to list the myriad women whose contribution was significant, sometimes decisive, to the development and productivity of writers [...] Remember the young women writers, their aspirant lives clogged in Love’s ambush - those who let their work go (his gifts are more important than mine - their sense of their own potentialities, their self-confidence already so robbed: not recognizing everyday enabling differences in circumstances for males, let alone superior advantages since birth) in the belief that they would become of the tradition-hallowed “inspirer-beloved”; and those who had every intention of going on writing - and tried; but usually subsumed into the server-enablers [...] Think too of the helper women, the famous enablers [...] who - if only in [...] occasional pieces - disclosed a writing capacity [...] Nearly every one, in their own distinguished way, evidencing quality, vision, capacity to contribute to literature, greater or as great as that of their men - but with marked contrast in productivity, influence, recognition (Olsen, 1989, p. 218)

Four of Herman’s seven siblings were women. One, Helen, slightly older than him. Three, Augusta, Kate, and Fanny, younger. Only two of them married (Helen and Kate) and only very late in life. Augusta and Fanny remained single. All of them moved around Herman Melville’s rhythms as a writer. Parker tells us about their daily life in 1847:

American dinnertime was at two, but the Melvilles dined late, at four, to accommodate Herman's need to concentrate on his manuscript for one sustained stretch of hours. (The normal time for tea in America was six, a "massive" meal, in effect, supper, according to the British observer Mrs. Felton, but for the Melvilles tea was delayed, and less substantial.) (Parker 1, 1996, p. 563).

This daily routine, which resembles so much Nathaniel Hawthorne's accounts of his own beginnings as a writer, can only be understood with the gender specificity of the writer being male and the caring people female, with the noted exception of an Emily Dickinson.

In a long letter to Evert Duyckinck, Melville gives him an account of how he "passes his time":

My own breakfast over, I go to my work-room & light my fire - then spread my M.S.S. on the table - take one business squint at it, & fall to with a will. At 2 1/2 P.M. I hear a preconcerted knock at my door, which (by request) continues till I rise & go to the door, which serves to wean me effectively from my writing, however interested I may be... My evenings I spend in a sort of mesmeric state in my room - not being able to read - only now & then skimming over some large-printed book (Parker 1, 1996, p. 799).

During the 1840s and early 50s, while Melville was writing *Typee* (1846), *Omoo* (1847), *Mardi* (1849), *Redburn* (1849), *White-Jacket* (1850), *Moby-Dick* (1851), *Pierre* (1852), and "Bartleby" (1853) among many other short stories, those four women would do all the revising and preparation for printing. It was especially Helen and Augusta who would be responsible for the immense task, the chore, of copying. Their time was organized around Melville's writing, as the following fragments from Parker's biography indicate:

By 21 December 1850 Melville was still not writing at anything like top speed. That day Augusta wrote Helen (now in Lansingburgh) not to rush home to take over the copying duties: 'As to Herman's M.S.S. you need not hurry your return on that account, he gets on very slowly with it. As soon as he is ready for you, I will let you know' (Parker 1, 1996, p. 800).

On January 1849 Melville accompanied his [...] wife [...] leaving the proofs of *Mardi* in the hands of Augusta. She struggled with them through the month, with some tardy help from the author. In an interval Augusta entered into her commonplace book, *Orient Pearls at Random Strung*, a poem, “The Rights of Women,” by Mrs. E. Little, that sufficiently conveyed her sense of the question being agitated in the aftermath of the Seneca Falls convention in 1848 (Parker 1, 1996, p. 612).

Interestingly enough, Melville’s *Mardi* is dedicated to one of his siblings, but not Augusta. The inscription reads: “Dedicated to my brother, Allan Melville”.

Hershell Parker’s two-volume biography reveals how for a number of years, the entire family was devoted to Herman’s writing: “As the member of the family who had first encouraged Herman to write down his adventures in the Marquesas, Augusta retained a special concern for his career, but everyone in the Fourth Avenue house was caught up in the process of bookmaking as well as babymaking” (Parker 1, 1996, p. 613). August, therefore, seems to be particularly busy with Herman’s texts: “In a letter to Lizzie on 27 January 1849 who was then pregnant with her first child: ‘- *Malcolm Melville!* [...] How I long to press him to my heart. There, I can write no more. The last proof sheets are through. “Mardi’s” a book! -. “Ah my own Kostanza! child of many prayers.” Oro’s blessing on thee.’” (1996, p. 613).

So very busy that Helen actually realized that the bonds of sisterly love could, or had, become actual chains of quasi-enslavement: “now Augusta in her way was a slave, yoked to him. Helen, the only one who knew what her sister was enduring, assured her in late June, “I can sympathise in your state of entire employment” - effectively a form of enslavement” (Parker 2, 2002, pp. 220-221).

Echoing Virginia Woolf’s fantasy of a Judith Shakespeare born to William’s parents, one wonders whether any one of Herman’s sisters may have had the same creative gifts, the same talents, the same yearnings and the same literary aspirations as her brother. Augusta’s letter to her very dear friend Mary Blatchford may be pertinent here: “I really believe that I could at this moment indite a sonnet.” (Letter from Augusta Melville to Mary Blatchford. 17 October 1850. Quoted in Parker 1, 1996, p. 786).

Was Herman Melville himself unaware of that potential in his sister(s)? Was he not conscious that both Helen and Augusta had to sacrifice that potential talent by becoming mechanical copyists? Melville knew for sure that the only way of copying is by not introducing yourself, by taking to the extreme the alienating labor of a scrivener.

This possible awareness invites a reading / teaching of the story by which Herman Melville may not be only identifying with the scrivener of the story “Bartleby”, but also - uncomfortably - with the lawyer. The entries for the year 1853 in Parker’s biography serve to illustrate the parallelisms: “Melville apparently wrote “Bartleby, the Scrivener” between mid-August and the week of Kate’s wedding in mid-September. Augusta recorded no letters written between 6 and 24 August, a possible indicating that she was copying furiously...” (Parker 2, 2002, p. 176). Our reading of the story therefore looks at masculinity not in the light that Leverenz does, that is, as traumatic for a male writer in a moment when writing was considered a feminine activity, but as a privileged position over that of the silenced voices in Melville’s own family. This reading serves us to teach “Bartleby” in the light of another Melville story, “The Tartarus of Maids” (1855) - part of a diptych with “The Paradise of Bachelors”- in which Melville analyzes the material conditions of writing. In his visit to remote paper mills, the narrator of the story realizes how women are the victims of the social division of labor which condemns them to produce paper - as women - and prevents them from writing on paper - as women - too.

Melville’s texts therefore show how writing may often come at the expense of the non-writing of other people, whose yearning to say will go silenced and whose identities disappears in the generation of the materiality of texts written by other people. Gender is here an issue at stake, and in my reading / teaching of “Bartleby” Herman Melville did not see his masculinity with anxiety because of the deviance of gender expectations in the America of the 1840s and 50s, but rather on the contrary, with the anxiety of seeing his gender the bearer of undeniable privileges for writers of his times.

People mentioned:

Helen Maria Melville (Helen) 1817-1888 Helen Griggs

Herman Melville (Herman) 1819-1891

Augusta Melville (Guss) 1821-1876

Catherine Melville (Kate) 1825-1905 Kate Hoadley

Frances Priscilla Melville (Fanny) 1827-1885

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“The Romantic Poet as Model of Masculinity”

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One of Romanticism's greatest problems is that it has been taught and written about for many years, not from an honest academic standpoint; not from a rigorous, disinterested, inquiring standpoint, but from a quasi-religious standpoint. Critics and teachers of Romanticism have all too often been Romanticism's evangelists. The student, unable to recognise anything sublime in the poetry of Wordsworth is deemed by herself, and by her teacher, an insensitive failure. The teacher of course, like the priest, conceals, meanwhile, his own inability to transcend the material world. Fortunately, cultural and literary criticism since the 1980s has looked on Romanticism with a more sceptical eye. Equally, poets and writers of the Romantic period, such as John Clare, once considered very minor indeed for not living up to the aesthetic and philosophical standards of Wordsworth and Coleridge, are now central to our understanding of early nineteenth century poetry. Wordsworth, it will be remembered, became disillusioned with the French Revolution, and with progressive politics in general. Dismayed by events in France, it is argued, he turned his attention inwards and upwards, in search of spiritual rather than material transformation. "Between 1793 and 1798 Wordsworth lost the world merely to gain his own immortal soul" (McGann, 1985, p. 88) says Jerome McGann. Not everyone took the same route. William Blake, for example, a man for whom the material and spiritual worlds were indistinguishable, never lost faith in revolution. Neither did Shelley nor Byron, though their early deaths may have been helpful in this respect. English Romanticism, then, as constructed by Wordsworth and Coleridge, was basically a rather superficial, a rather wishy-washy kind of religion. It was a rejection of the material world, the here and now, the struggle for equal rights, improved living standards, health, parliamentary representation, the abolition of slavery, the fair distribution of land, education, childcare – all of these things, for an indeterminate and ungraspable sense of spiritual superiority.

So far, so good. But why was the club so exclusive? Why were women not allowed to become Romantic poets: there were plenty of women writing at the time. And why was Romanticism so class-obsessed? It is no new discovery to say that Romanticism is masculine. Or to say that the Romantic Poet is a powerful model of

masculinity. But this is not an area that is usually considered at much length, particularly in the classroom. As a model of masculinity it is evidently difficult (though not necessarily impossible) for a woman to become a Romantic Poet; there are a number of often unsurpassable obstacles to be overcome. Firstly, the question of nature: the Romantic Poet must "wander lonely as a cloud", but for women, this was effectively impossible. As Stephen Hunt points out: "There remained the rarely mentioned but ever-present possibility that the Arcadian countryside was peopled by potential rapists." (Hunt, 2000, p. 53). Secondly, at least as far as women are concerned, there is an "identification of the 'lunatic' with nature..." (2000, p. 58). The Bluestockings, with their literary salons and their preference for sensibility and the domestic, constructed not only a model of femininity, in which the woman is expected to remain at home, caring for her family and making the world a better place by attention to the tiniest domestic detail, but also a model of masculinity. If women were confined to the hearth, then masculinity, all too often constructed in opposition to femininity, must find its place elsewhere, wheeling and dealing, travelling, observing and studying the wider world.. The masculine Romantic Poet is, in part, merely *not* a Bluestocking.

Being out in the countryside is also a question of class. People do not walk, unless they have to. Romanticism changed this, at least for men. Women were chided should they venture out alone, as Jane Austen demonstrates in *Pride and Prejudice* when Elizabeth Bennet muddies herself disgracefully by walking cross-country to her sister's sickbed. Anne Yearsley, the so-called Milk Maid Poet, who was "consistently described as 'wild', 'simple', 'natural'" (Waldron, p. 118), did not write about nature at all. In her poem "Lines, composed in a Carriage, on seeing an Half-blown Primrose in the Mouth of a Peasant; the Author being on the Road to Bath" the title plainly describes the poet as being safely enclosed in a carriage, cut off from the natural world, unlike the 'Peasant' walking along with a flower in his mouth. What chance does a woman have of being a Romantic Poet if this is the closest she can get to the natural world? Not, it should be added, that Anne Yearsley wanted to be a nature poet; her interests lay elsewhere.

Wordsworth, meanwhile, in 1793, was able to walk across Salisbury Plain for his own pleasure. On his journey, at least according to the poetry he subsequently produced, he met a female vagrant, a woman brought to poverty by enclosure, war, and widowhood. The theme of the female vagrant became popular, and appears in later

poetry by Wordsworth himself, Robert Southey, the Scots poet Robert Tannahil, and Amelia Opie, among others. She is an object both of pity and of horror. She has passed beyond the pale of acceptable society and cannot return; indeed her only escape is through death. The male vagrant however, is rarely, if ever, mentioned. Indeed, as David Chandler comments, "on his first Wye visit Wordsworth probably looked more like a common tramp than a gentleman on holiday." But men, unlike women, are allowed out on their own, even if they do risk being mistaken for a labourer or tramp. How, then, can a woman write nature poetry? How can she experience the transformation described by Wordsworth in "Lines, Written a few miles above Tintern Abbey, On Revisiting the Banks of the Wye During a Tour. July 13, 1798"? Well she can, of course, like Dorothy, accompany a man, but sadly, women's brains are just not up to fully appreciating the experience: "...in thy voice I catch / The language of my former heart, and read / My former pleasures in the shooting lights / Of thy wild eyes" Wordsworth tells his sister, reminding us that she still has a long way to go on her spiritual journey if she is to be as uplifted as he is. Charlotte Smith, it is true, sneaked out into rural Sussex, but she kept her head down. Her nature poetry, like John Clare's, focuses on the minute, the hidden and the local. Like Clare, she catalogues flowers, and confines herself to sunken lanes, never surveying, in Romantic picturesque style, the panorama of nature from a lofty viewpoint, as Wordsworth does in Tintern Abbey.

Ironically, it is Charlotte Smith's long poem "The Emigrants" which is now widely recognised as having inspired the opening lines of "Tintern Abbey". But Smith does not recognise the healing, spiritual properties of nature that Wordsworth does: she is too familiar with the poverty of the country dwellers. Here, then, is another aspect of Romantic masculinity: men are spiritual, women are material. This neo-Platonist duality has been recognised by ecofeminists as a convention of gender. Women are closer to nature than men because, like the land, they are fertile and life-giving. Being close to nature they are, following the neo-Platonist tradition so deeply entrenched in our culture, material and inferior. Men, being to a certain extent divorced from the actual function of child birth are less material, more spiritual. This is the far from original assumption made by Wordsworth and later critics of Romanticism. It is again ironic that women, supposedly closer to nature than men, are denied access to it. Nevertheless, the refusal to allow women to join the Romantic Poets' club, to aspire to the Sublime, does not silence them. The extraordinary events in France, on which Wordsworth and

Coleridge turned their backs, were faithfully recorded by Helen Maria Williams, who remained in Paris for most of the revolutionary and Napoleonic years. The campaign for the abolition of slavery, which was largely ignored by Wordsworth, and was openly opposed by radicals such as William Cobbett, may well not have succeeded when it did were it not for the support given it by women. The much-derided Bluestockings, women such as Hannah More and Anna Laetitia Barbauld, campaigned tirelessly for abolition, recognising that the enslavement of Africans bore similarities to the subjugation of women. Such issues no longer concerned the High Romantics. In common with the priesthood of any patriarchal religion, the prophets of Romanticism remained loyal to their gender, and chose not to rock the boat.

Those men who did choose to rock the boat, the so-called Cockney school of poets, were attacked for, among other things, being feminine. Ayumi Mizukoshi argues that Leigh Hunt, who was imprisoned for his opposition to the monarchy, "is without exception grouped with the feminine or effeminate. It is taken for granted that while Keats was manfully striding into the epic quest, Hunt had been left behind in the realm of the pastoral goddess Flora. In referring to his lack of intellectual and theoretical power, modern academics are implicitly criticising Hunt for his effeminacy." Keats was also a member of the Cockney school, and a close friend of Hunt's. Having been accepted into the canon as a major Romantic Poet, critics needed to confirm his masculinity: "[f]rom F. R. Leavis to Harold Bloom," continues Mizukoshi, "twentieth-century critics have made every effort to masculinise and hence canonise Keats. Meanwhile, Hunt was increasingly dismissed as minor, effeminate and Cockney."

When considering the Romantic Poet, then, or at least the model provided by Wordsworth, we should be aware that it is a model of masculinity, a model which deliberately excludes women, and which reaffirms male domination of the literary world at a time when the novel, increasingly produced and read by women, was becoming dangerously powerful. Romanticism restores poetry to the position of dominant genre, while at the same time reaffirming the literary and spiritual pre-eminence of the masculine gender. So powerful is this model, that while poetry has (relatively) recently escaped masculine dominance, the figure of the masculine Romantic Poet remains as potent as ever. The extremely high status awarded Romantic poetry by the canon – at least at a level with Shakespeare – is also a confirmation of the status of the masculine in traditional literary judgement. The argument is rather circular,

as such arguments usually are: the true Romantic Poet is a man – Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, Byron and Keats are the examples which prove this to be the case, hence, since only these five men are true Romantic Poets (though Keats, Shelley and Byron are neither quite as masculine nor quite as great as Wordsworth and Coleridge), only men can be true Romantic Poets. And what is Romanticism? It is about nature and the countryside – a space denied to women; and it is about matters of the spirit, a condition denied to women who are, by nature, earthy and material. Ultimately the conclusion must be reached that women, and male poets who do not satisfy the strict masculine requirements of Romanticism, are better off remaining outside the club. By concerning themselves with this world, the material world, which is the only world we have, their poetry is both more interesting and far, far more meaningful.

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The U.S.A., in the period ranging from 1890 to 1940, was, to use David Minter's turn of phrase, torn between "conflicting alliances" (Minter, 1996). On the one hand, the

country witnessed the emergence of the “New Woman” and of what was perceived as the progressive feminization of society. At the same time that middle-class women were accessing the job market in significant numbers -mainly as secretaries and receptionists- and depriving men who occupied white-collar jobs of what had traditionally been a “male-only” space, working-class women engaged actively in the socialist, anarchist and unionist movements and achieved unprecedented visibility in them. Both these aspects were tangible signs of a re-organization of the world of labor, which involved the active participation of women. On top of that, an ever-growing group of feminists and “liberated women” got involved in two campaigns which had a profound impact on society: one to fight for the elective franchise, which, in its attempt to include the values of the domestic sphere into what was perceived as the too violent public space and political arena, threatened to bring about a re-definition of the national identity; the other one, to legalize the use of contraceptive measures, which, if freely used, would make motherhood optional and would, therefore, imply a redefinition of the social role allotted to women who would be not only fit to mother men but fit to live in equality with them. The growing participation of women in public, social and even political affairs was met with an equally growing skepticism and even resentment by men who understood their presence in those affairs as debilitating. The language of male anxiety crystallized into the expression of their fear of “social displacement and impugning of their besieged masculinity” (Minter, 1996, p. 121) and was translated into a cultural and ideological defense of the traditional masculine values, baptized as the “cult of the masculine” or the “cult of the strenuous life”.

This confrontation between the reformist push of the “new woman” and the resistance to change of the hegemonic male discourse is reflected in the tension between the appeal of the socialist and unionist ideas that were gaining strength in the U.S. of the turn of the century, and the reactionary combination of individualism and social Darwinism exemplified by Teddy Roosevelt’s 1898 speech “The cult of the Strenuous Life”:

In speaking to you, men of the greatest city of the West, men of the State which gave to the country Lincoln and Grant, men who preeminently and distinctly embody all that is most American in the American character I wish to preach, not the doctrine of ignoble ease, but the doctrine of the strenuous life; the life of toil and effort, of labor and strife; to preach that highest form of success which comes, not to the man who desires mere easy peace, but to the man who does not shrink

from danger, from hardship or from bitter toil, and who out of these wins the splendid ultimate triumph. A life of slothful ease, a life of that peace which springs merely from lack either of desire or of power to strive after great things, is as little worthy of a nation as of an individual

In this context, London's work proves particularly appropriate to illustrate the complexity of this ideological struggle. Considered by many a spokesperson for the "cult of masculinity" in novels such as *White Fang*, *The Call of the Wild* or *The Game*, and by others as a propagandist for socialist ideas in novels such as *The People of the Abyss*, he tries to bring together these two apparently irreconcilable extremes by defining himself as a defender of "Individualist Socialism", a self-imposed label which hints at the contradictions inherent to his work. These contradictions come to one of their more elaborate expressions in *Martin Eden*.

The sympathies of the novel are undoubtedly with the working-class, whose members are depicted as victims of the "vampirism" of the bourgeoisie, which keeps itself alive at the expense of the strength, vitality and life of the working class. In fact, Martin's own healthy body and still uncorrupted mind are put to the service of the bourgeoisie when he first meets Ruth Morse and "becomes clay in her hands immediately, as passionately desirous of being moulded by her as she was desirous of shaping him into the image of her ideal man" (London, 1982, p. 632). Ruth's parents shamelessly instrumentalize Martin in their desire to wake Ruth's somehow dormant nature to the realities of life:

He is the first man that ever drew a passing notice from Ruth," she told her husband. "She has been so singularly backward where men are concerned that I have been worried greatly."

Mr. Morse looked at his wife curiously.

"You mean to use this young sailor to wake her up?" he questioned.

"I mean that she is not to die an old maid if I can help it," was the answer. "If this young Eden can arouse her interest in mankind in general, it will be a good thing."

"A very good thing," he commented. "But suppose, —and we must suppose, sometimes, my dear, —suppose he arouses her interest too particularly in him?"

“Impossible,” Mrs. Morse laughed. “She is three years older than he, and, besides, it is impossible. Nothing will ever come of it. Trust that to me” (London, 1982, p. 633)

Martin Eden, after having escaped what London calls “the social Pit” and submerged himself in the decadent, conservative, and conventional life style of the middle-class reality of the Morses, finally understands, when it is too late for him, the beauty and moral superiority of the working class:

Realism is imperative to my nature, and the bourgeois spirit hates realism. The bourgeoisie is cowardly. It is afraid of life. And all your effort was to make me afraid of life. You would have formalized me. You would have compressed me into a two-by-four pigeonhole of life, where all life’s values are unreal, and false, and vulgar. [...] Vulgarly—a hearty vulgarity, I’ll admit—is the basis of bourgeois refinement and culture. (London, 1982, p. 915)

But this ode to the superiority of the working class is undermined by the celebration of masculinity and manly beauty incarnated by Martin Eden, the white supremacist version of the noble savage, the uneducated natural force that excels all other characters—more educated and civilized—in strength, vitality, health and generosity of heart and mind.

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XXX AEDEAN Congress, Huelva – diciembre, 2006

Round Table: "Gender, Race and Class: Ethnic Masculinities in Contemporary American Literature Written by Women" (I)

Panel: "Feminist and Gender Studies"

Participants: Dra. Àngels Carabí, Dr. Josep M. Armengol, Dra. Cristina Alsina, Sra. Isabel Seguro

Since the 1980s, the study of masculinity -namely, the cultural prescriptions that each society attaches to one's biological sex at a particular time (MacIntosh)- has increasingly become an academic object of analysis. Along with feminist and gay studies, masculinity studies has thus explored the meanings of "being a man" from multiple and innovative methodological and disciplinary perspectives. As more and more work is being done in the name of masculinity studies, increasing attention is being paid to the intersections between different factors such as masculinity, race, and class. In line with the latest trends of masculinity studies, then, the members of the research project "Construyendo nuevas masculinidades" (Instituto de la Mujer, Exp. N° 62/03), as a result of their three-year research work, propose two round tables on the analysis of how gender, race and class combine in the construction of ethnic masculinities. While most studies of literary masculinities have focused on the analysis of male-authored texts, the tables that we propose will explore a plurality of representations of ethnic men from women whose work challenges hegemonic patriarchal values.

Round Table I

Although ethnic studies have traditionally focused on the analysis of non-white cultures and races, **Josep M. Armengol** will explore whiteness as an ethnic construct. Borrowing from the latest work of whiteness studies, Armengol will analyze the "white race" as a social, historical, and political invention. Armengol will point as well to the intersections between whiteness studies, which focuses on the cultural construction of whiteness, and masculinity studies, which approaches masculinity as a specific gendered construct.

The hegemonic definition of masculinity underwent a serious process of revision during the 60s and 70s. The Vietnam War had emasculating effects both on those who fought it and came out of the experience having suffered extreme changes in their bodies and their psyche, and on those who didn't fight it and were, thus, deprived of one of the most generally accepted rites of passage to mature masculinity: soldiering. This crisis of masculinity is also marked by a growing consciousness of how issues of class bear on one's perception of what "being a man" means. **Cristina Alsina** will analyze how women writers -writing in the 80s- represent these changes in their work of fiction.

Isabel Seguro will explore Asian American masculinities and other ethnic masculinities from the viewpoint of Asian women immigrants in the United States, particularly those who entered the country as "war brides" after the Second World War. Most of them, being women married to American military men, had to deal with issues of racism as well as with different notions of manhood and gender relations in their new lives in the United States.

Àngels Carabí will carry out a comparative analysis of the representations of masculinity in the writings of women authors from different ethnic backgrounds to explore how different cultural backgrounds produce different ways of acting masculine. The purpose of Carabí's analysis is twofold. On the one hand, Carabí aims to analyze how gender, race and class play a central role in the construction of ethnic masculinities. On the other hand, her intention is to point to the complexity of the interrelations which are forged when different ethnic masculinities are in contact in multicultural societies. For her analysis, Carabí will investigate masculine constructs in the works of Native American, African American and Asian American women writers. References will be also be made to the recent film *Crash* (2006), directed by Paul Haggis.

XXX AEDEAN Congress, Huelva – diciembre, 2006

Round Table: "Gender, Race and Class: Ethnic Masculinities in Contemporary American Literature Written by Women" (II)

Panel: "Feminist and Gender Studies"

Participants: Dra. Bárbara Ozieblo, Sra. Marta Bosch, Dr. Rodrigo Andrés, Dr. William C. Phillips

Rodrigo Andrés will explore how in the works of Jewish American writers Tillie Olsen (1912-) and Grace Paley (1922-) male characters are presented as co-victims of an oppressive class system, rather than as patriarchal victimizers. Both writers –celebrated icons of feminist literature in the United States- pay homage to women of the working classes and also dignify their men as potential partners at the level of both personal and political commitments.

Marta Bosch will explore the extent to which the writings of contemporary Arab-American women authors such as Diana Abu-Jaber, Elmaz Abinader, Eden Adnan, Mona Simpson, or Naomi Shihab Nye reproduce or depart from traditional representations of Arab masculinity. Taking into account their gender, class, and ethnicity, Bosch's contribution will examine the ways in which these writers articulate representations of Western masculinity alongside their Arab cultural heritage and the stereotypes of Arab men circulating in Western societies. As will be argued, such stereotypes are characterized by ambivalence, showing traits of effeminacy (related to colonialism and Orientalism) in contrast with features of hypermasculinity (related to violence and patriarchy).

Bill Phillips will analyze how the traditional fictional American detective powerfully reinforced an already existing model of white, middle class, heterosexual masculinity. Nevertheless, alternative models, such as Joseph Hansen's 1970 gay detective novel *Fadeout*, Jame Lee Burke's Dave Robicheaux series or Paula L. Wood's more recent Charlotte Justice novels have challenged the gender, race and class bias associated with the genre.

Bárbara Ozieblo will explore the intersections between masculinity and ethnicity in Chicana literature. Ozieblo will investigate the works of Chicana writers, such as Cherríe Moraga, to try to illustrate how Chicano masculinity is also marked by the specificities of race and class.

5. CONCLUSIONS

5. CONCLUSIONS

Masculinity Studies and their Application to Literary Criticism

Despite the increasing number of texts published on literary masculinities, this field of study continues to be widely unknown in the academic world. While the analysis of women and femininity in literature is already a common theme within literary studies and, generally, is familiar to both female and male students, this is not the case with the feminist analysis of literary masculinities. As the literary critic Berthold Schoene (2000) has pointed out, if you asked any perceptive student to write an essay on the representation of women in Jane Austen, or on the stifling impact of the patriarchal politics of gender on women in Shakespearean comedy, the result is frequently a clear and well argued piece of writing. However, if you ask them to comment on the representation of men, the result is usually a combination of a feeling of uncomfortableness, nervousness, and silence.

There are various reasons for such a reaction. On the one hand, the analysis of the literary images of women has a long history within feminist literary criticism, while the feminist study of literary masculinities is a relatively recent contribution to the academia. Except for a few literary critics like Leverenz (1989), men have only begun to analyze masculinity in American culture and literature. Moreover, very few texts suggest how to carry out an analysis of literary masculinities, which cannot be simply based on imitating the perspectives, objectives and resolutions of feminist literary criticism. In order to deal with the specific male condition, these studies must develop their own discourse against patriarchy, a difficult and long-term goal. For all these reasons, the studies of masculinities in literature are not so widely spread as women's studies.

However, the research project "Constructing New Masculinities" has tried to demonstrate how a re-examination of American literature from the perspective of masculinity could be highly beneficial for various reasons. Firstly, if the erroneous assumption that the male experience is equivalent to human experience distorted the

images of women as literary characters and writers, such an assumption has also limited our perceptions of men in literature. Masculinity studies propose an overall re-reading of the images and ideals of manhood in American literature. As stated by James D. Riemer, "in the last ten or fifteen years, men's studies have examined our cultural ideals of masculinity and how they affect men's lives, transforming universal human experiences into experiences which are specifically male." To focus on American literature from the perspective of masculinity is, therefore, a means of breaking with the analysis of themes, which are supposedly universal and hardly tangible, in order to explore the specific effect of the cultural ideals of manhood on the daily and personal lives of men (Riemer). To re-read, for example, themes which are apparently universal and unmarked by gender such as emotions and violence, from the point of view of masculinity, can help us to understand how its ideals affect, and more often than not, limit and complicate men's lives in U.S. culture and literature.

Another result from re-visiting American literature through the prism of masculinities studies is the possibility of analyzing an important number of literary works as social documents which reflect the notions of manhood in U.S. culture. Given that any society is plural—not monolithic—masculinities studies also try to demonstrate the multiple views and representations of men in literature. If the masculinity concepts of an author are different from those of his own contemporaries, that variation tends to be even greater when we contrast the representations of masculinity in different historical moments. As with social concepts of masculinity, literary ideas about male gender also change according to the historical and socio-cultural context. Moreover, the changes undergone by the cultural meanings of masculinity frequently derive in, and reflect, changes in its literary representations. Consequently, the relationship between masculinity studies in literature and the broader field of masculinity studies in general can be described as "reciprocal" (Riemer). If the re-reading of masculinity in American literature can help us to understand better the social concepts of the male gender, the information from other fields such as sociology and psychology can illuminate our re-examination of American literature in very innovative ways, as we have been able to prove in our own research for the project "Constructing New Masculinities." Also, to link fields of study which are often separated, such as sociology and critical theory, can help us to transgress and subvert the traditional disciplinary boundaries, modifying as well literary criticism's usual format. Despite the unquestionable value of literature as a

social document that reflects our cultural ideals of manhood, the literary studies on male gender should not be interpreted literally, however, as sociological, psychological, or anthropological research on masculinities in the United States. As James D. Reimer has stated, we cannot expect literary studies of masculinities to "provide all the 'truth' about masculinity in relation to a particular social, economic, and racial/ethnic context," although they "can offer very valuable contributions for future research, potentially corroborative, on the part of sociologists, psychologists, and social anthropologists." With what has been said up till now, we could conclude that the main objective of a focus on American literature from the prism of masculinity is a "re-vision", which has been defined by the essayist and author Adrienne Rich as "the act of looking back, of looking with new eyes, of getting into an old text from a new critical direction." Such a re-examination implies analyzing not only traditional, but also alternative masculinity models in literature. As Reimer points out, in order to change the lives of men [it is necessary] something more than the recognition of the limitations and negative effects of our current ideals of masculinity. There must also be a recognition and reinforcement of positive alternatives to the ideals and behaviors of traditional masculinities. The critique of the traditional models of manhood and the search for new ways to be a man, therefore, have constituted the two main goals of our research project in the last three years.

With the twofold objective of subverting traditional patriarchal values and contributing to the search for new, alternative models of masculinity, the research project has counted with two different, complementary parts. The first one has examined masculine characters who are unable to give up patriarchal, male values such as sexism, individualism, competitiveness, or repression and emotional uprootness. The second part has celebrated the subversive images of male characters in the literature by American women who "struggle to reach stages of higher happiness...following feminist scales of values" (Daly).

According to masculinity theorists such as Victor J. Seidler, Lillian Rubin, Carol Gilligan and Nancy Chodorow, among others, the construction of patriarchal masculinity has traditionally been based on certain aspects like the obsession for professional success and work, rationality, emotional repression, as well as individualism and a lack of relational attitudes towards others. As Seidler has pointed out (1989), "masculinity is essentially a negative, learned identity which defines itself as

the antithesis of emotions and affects." Challenging the traditional norms of masculinity, various male characters created by American female writers like Toni Morrison or Sandra Cisneros, however, aspire to feel the warmth of a home; to experience emotions and passions, especially love; and, in conclusion, to establish relations and solid, long-lasting, affective links. The male characters of these stories consequently have a new relational, contextual, integrating and vital consciousness, and discover the value of the experience of continuity and of links with other people.

As Carol Gilligan argues in her already classical work *In a Different Voice* (1982), this relational attitude towards life has traditionally been more valued (and embodied) by women than by men. In contrast to the male emphasis on competitiveness and individualism, women have considered affective links and relationships as priority and vital components. Consequently, women tend to consider morality as intimately related to the care of the other, valuing the interdependence on individualism and rigid independence. As Gilligan herself explains, this "ideal about care is...a relational activity, it is about looking at and answering to need, taking care of the world by maintaining the network of links so that nobody is left alone" (1982). Even though taking care of the other and all these relational attitudes have been, as Gilligan has shown, traditionally feminine, various literary texts which have been analyzed within our research project "Constructing New Masculinities" frequently trace male characters that undergo positive transformations, leaving behind their initial individualism for more open attitudes, less individualistic and more relational. The analysis of these innovative masculine models, which reach a higher grade of happiness by taking care of the other, could contribute to a feminist redefinition of masculinity. As Riemer reminds us, it is probably easier for men to change their lives if we help them realize what they can become. In this sense, the research project "Constructing New Masculinities" has attempted to contribute to the opening of a process of reflection about the construction and possible deconstruction of masculinity, using as a starting point American literature written by women, who have frequently dealt with the difficulties, and also with the promise of change in men. During the last few years, the different researchers of the project "Constructing New Masculinities" have therefore shared a twofold objective: to question traditional models of manhood and to contribute to the search for new, alternative ways of being a man through American literature written by women.

In relation to the section on **masculinity and warfare** Dr. Cristina Alsina has analyzed how the fiction on the Vietnam War written by American women writers has subverted the traditional masculinity model encouraged by the politics of the Reagan and Bush administrations. The characters created by two Southern female writers, Bobbie Ann Mason and Jayne Ann Phillips, are human beings whose vulnerability does not entail a damaged masculinity, but an excellent chance for thinking about the concepts of hegemonic national identity and on the complexity of male subjectivity. The male characters portrayed by Mason and Phillips question, through their behavior, the hegemonic discourses which determine what it means "to be a man." Both writers re-examine the traditional forms of male subjectivity and offer alternative masculinity profiles which are more egalitarian and dialoguing, that free men from the prevailing notions associated with traditional manhood.

The theme on **masculinity and ethnicity** is a field of study which is increasingly being incorporated into the analysis of masculinity. Although the multicultural reality of the United States, for obvious reasons, invites us to explore ethnic masculinities, the truth is that this analysis is becoming unavoidable in European societies, increasingly more multicultural in nature. The reflections of critics on masculinity and ethnicity like Michael Awkward, Robyn Wiegman, bell hooks, David Gilmore, David Eng, Lynne Segal, Alfredo Mirande and Mrinalini Sinha, among others, have been essential for our study on the way race and ethnicity influence male behavior and the relations between cultures.

Consequently, Dr. Àngels Carabí, in her study of **African American masculinities**, has explored the way in which the colonizing discourse, since the period of slavery, constructed certain stereotypes of the black man which still prevail in contemporary culture, and whose aim has been to control, as much as possible, certain wild forces that overcome the white man. Studies on black masculinity reveal that one of the most feared stereotypes—the black, hypersexualized male—is, in fact, a projection of the white man's repressions onto the "uncontrollable" body of the black man. If "the subject of the dream is the dreamer itself," as Toni Morrison states, the white man has dreamed about himself as the inferior "Other", who has agglutinated his darker wishes and, consequently, had demonized him. The work of the women writers

that we have studied, such as Toni Morrison, Gloria Naylor and June Jordan, has consisted in breaking down the construction of these stereotypes and to provide their black male characters with humanity and a subjectivity of their own. However, although this empathizing process had led them to create male characters who are incredibly generous and who surprise us due to their re-writing of masculinity, the fact is that these alternative masculine models are the product of a process of evolution in which one or more women, and sometimes, a "different" man, have intervened positively. Thus, in some cases, the texts of Morrison and Alice Walker portray free men who have learned to leave behind the traditional codes of masculinity. In others, the men continue to abide to the rigid sexist codes but, led by the authors, we can approach them and understand the process which had made them the way they are, without being uncritical of their actions.

Isabel Seguro has focused the analysis of the representations of **Asian American masculinity** on examining the ways in which Asian American playwrights see themselves with the aim of deconstructing the gender stereotypes created by popular culture in the United States as a result of the history of Asian immigration to the country. Asian American playwrights have dealt with the politics in charge of producing, on the one hand, images of the Asian man as emasculated and, in its more threatening version, as sexually and culturally decadent. On the other, the Asian woman has been depicted as submissive and willing to please men, especially if he is white—the *Lotus Blossom* type—or as the revengeful and hypersexualized *Dragon Lady*. Asian American artists have endeavoured not only to show the devastating effects of those images upon the material and psychological reality of the members of their communities, but also to offer new images of themselves according to their everyday lives. Consequently, they represent Asian American characters in their daily lives within U.S. society, emphasizing the contribution of Asian American communities to the construction and development of the United States.

The representations of **Native Americans** which, traditionally, have been conveyed—and distorted—by mainstream literature and culture, mainly by Hollywood, have been examined by Dr. Àngels Carabí. Despite the fact that in the last decades there has been a willingness to provide more positive images of the indigenous population,

for example Kevin Costner's film *Dances with Wolves* (1990), the film continues to reproduce traditional values, particularly the ones concerned with gender relations and the relations between women and men of different races. In order to analyze Native American culture, it is necessary to understand its vision of the world. Concepts such as cosmic unity where everything is interrelated, the notion of harmony with the environment, the identification with, not the control of, the land, as well as the oral legacy of culture, are essential for explaining the literary production and the representations of Native American men. Àngels Carabí has looked at Native American women writers who began publishing since the 1960s as a result of the Civil Rights Movement and feminism. Since then, we have the establishment of Native American literature written by women which gives voice to both women and men from the Indian community. Being conscious of the value of their culture, writers such as Leslie Silko, Louise Erdrich, and Joy Harjo, among others, painfully look at the lives of young Indians who feel displaced in the United States either because they are marginalized for being Indians, or acculturated in order not to be seen as Indians. Half-castes, discriminated against due to racist practices and with no points of reference, and with the disappearance of the basic feelings of equilibrium, usually fall into alcoholism, fights against other Indians, the abandonment of families, and even suicide. As an act of responsibility towards their own communities, these women writers explore in their fiction the lives of young men, analyzing themes such as male bonding, filial relations, violence between men and against women, with the aim, which is sometimes accomplished, of re-establishing harmonious human relations, and also with the environment.

Marta Bosch has studied the representations of **masculinity in Arab American literature**. Therefore, she has focused on the literature produced by contemporary first or second generation American immigrant writers from Arab countries, such as Diana Abu-Jaber, Elmaz Abinader, Etel Adnan or Mona Simpson, and the negotiation between the notions of masculinity from Arab and American cultures. Another focus of her analysis has been the dominant stereotypes of Arab men in the United States. The conclusion reached is that these writers project alternative models of being a man. They propose male figures who withdraw from the stereotypes and the traditional notions of masculinity in Arab and American cultures, and who establish more affective and

healthy relationships. In their work, these writers express the complexity of the relations between cultures and the positive values that may derive from them.

On her part, Dr. Bárbara Ozieblo applies masculinity studies in theatre by critics such as Carla McDonough, David Savran, and Robert Vorlicky, among others, to works by contemporary women playwrights. Ozieblo demonstrates how in the theatre of women, women playwrights do not appropriate themselves of the space of the male gaze in order to create images of an ideal man, but portray men in extreme situations—like the commitment of parricide or sexual harassment within the family—with the aim, not only to analyze, but also to provoke the spectator/reader to rethink the roles which, according to gender, hegemonic culture makes us perform. The innovative aspect of the analysis carried out by Ozieblo lies in the selection of women playwrights from different backgrounds whose works reach very similar conclusions in relation to the negative effects of a hegemonic and patriarchal concept of masculinity. This is the case of Suzan-Lori Parks (African American), Paula Vogel (Anglo-American), and Cherríe Moraga (Chicana).

Dr. Rodrigo Andrés has revised the best contributions of the studies of masculinities applied to the **re-reading of the classics from the American literary canon**, underlying the inherent homophobia in the main studies of male theorists, such as David Leverenz's classical study *Manhood and the American Renaissance* (1989), widely read among specialists of the nineteenth century as well as those of gender, psychoanalysis, and studies of sexuality. In a second stage, Andrés analyzed how American women writers have incorporated masculinity studies criticism into their creative work, producing literary texts which re-examine classical male characters, such as the novel *Ahab's Wife* (1999) whose author, Sena Jeter Naslund, re-writes the character of Captain Ahab from Herman Melville's novel *Moby Dick* (1851), differentiating between social masculinity and the character's genuine humanity, oppressed by the norms of behavior demanded by the former. Finally, Andrés explored how the reading of this type of re-writings of the classics from the perspective of the new studies of masculinity entail a re-evaluation of the socio-cultural conditions which drove the writers of those classic texts to present certain models of masculinity, either for perpetuating them or, on some occasions, for denouncing them. Andrés has

demonstrated through his research that Sena Jeter Naslund's re-reading of Herman Melville's novel points at the fertility of the interaction between gender theories and the literary canon in order to achieve two goals: to underline the distortions behind the hegemonic construction of Western masculinity, and to aim at new masculinities which, being more dialoguing and aware of the sexual, gender, class or racial "Others", can become a threat to the social hierarchies in the West.

Finally, Dr. Bill Phillips has analyzed the changes undergone by the **American detective novel** along the history of this genre. In the beginning, the figure of the detective was associated to that of a man of honor, but with the typical prejudices of his times. Specifically, the novels by Dashiell Hammet, Raymond Chandler, Mickey Spillane, and others, represent women, characters of different ethnic groups and sexual orientation as inferior, ridiculous and immoral. However, since the seventies both male and female authors of the detective novel have introduced many changes to the masculinity model represented by the detective, up to the point of making him/her almost (or sometimes completely) unrecognizable. This process has led to the creation of alternative models of gender roles (not always embodied by the detective) which can be useful for presenting the possibility of a different society, more fair, egalitarian, and tolerant.

6. ACTIVITIES

6.1 Seminars

- **Victoria Sau**
Seminar "Masculinity as a Mystery"
University of Barcelona, October 22, 2004

The seminar given by the feminist psychologist Victoria Sau dealt with themes which reflected on issues related to violence, aggressiveness, and fear in relation to the traditional construction of masculinity. Likewise, she examined the concepts of paternity, the nature of the relationships between fathers and their children, and the influence of hegemonic masculinity on the upbringing of the male infant.

- **Dr. Matthew Roudané**
"Public Issues, Private Tensions: Contemporary American Drama."
January 13, 2005.

Dr. Matthew Roudané, Professor of English and Chair at Georgia State University, Atlanta, is currently Fulbright Professor in the Department of English Philology at the Universidad Complutense of Madrid. Dr. Roudané gave the seminar titled "Public Issues, Private Tensions: Contemporary American Drama."

This seminar forms part of the activities organized by the research project "Constructing New Masculinities," linked to the Center for Women and Literature/UNESCO Chair "Women, Development and Cultures." In the seminar Dr. Roudané made a critique of American culture through the analyses of masculinities in American theater. Dr. Roudané has published a critical history of American theater since 1960 to the present, as well as numerous works and essays on Sam Shepard, Edward Albee, and David Mamet, among other playwrights.

- **Dr. Linda G. Jones**
"Textual Representations of Gender and Masculinity in Medieval Islamic Society: Al-Andalus and the Magreb."
February 1, 2005.

Dr. Linda Jones (Department of English Philology at the University of Barcelona) began the seminar talking about gender studies' starting point, that "men and women are not born, they are made", an appropriate idea for explaining gender and masculinity in medieval and modern Islamic society. Although the term "gender" is a modern, Western

construction, the concept of "virile ideal" (Ar. *Kamal al-rijjaliyya*) has its origins in pre-Islamic Arab society. The ideals of masculinity are "textualized" in a variety of cultural products which serve as models to be emulated by Muslim men. These discourses include pre-Islamic poetry; the Qur'an and the Hadith (the formal record of the sayings and doings of the Prophet Muhammad and his Companions); biographical dictionaries and hagiographic literature about illustrious men; and dynastic chronicles. After providing a brief overview of the emblematic virtues of masculinity in pre-Islamic Arabia, Jones analyzed how Islam re-interpreted gender constructions in order to produce various typologies of "ideal virility", which sometimes competed among each other, and which continue to be applied nowadays. As Hayden White has observed, every historical narrative has as a latent or evident aim to "*moralize*" the events that it deals with, so the above mentioned cultural products are used in order to trace the competitive ideals of "ideal virility" within the specific social context of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries in the Al-Andalus and the Magreb. The construction of gender was explored within the context of post-revolutionary Iran and in the late twentieth century Afghanistan, with the aim to highlight the continuity of the definitions of "ideal masculinity" in contemporary Muslim societies.

- **Conference of the American writer Bobbie Ann Mason**

March 2005, in collaboration with the Department of English and German Philology from the University of Barcelona and the General Consulate of the United States (Barcelona).

Bobbie Ann Mason teaches at the University of Kentucky and is a renowned American writer, with novels such as *In Country* (1985) or *An Atomic Romance* (2005). The conference was divided into two parts. Firstly, Mason reviewed her own work and then talked about the literary tradition of the South, the construction of masculinity, and about her own literary influences and the act of creating literature.

- **Dr. Tiffany Ana Lopez**

"**His Ear in My Hand: Gender and Violence in Chicana Feminist Writing.**"
April 20, 2005

Dr. Tiffany Ana Lopez is editor of the anthology *Growing Up Chicana/o* (William Morrow & Co.) and author of *The Alchemy of Blood: Violence as Critical Discourse in U.S. Latina/o Writing* (Duke University Press, forthcoming).

The seminar presented an overview of the ways foundational voices in Chicana feminism, from Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldua to Mary Pat Brady and Eden Torres, have engaged with matters of gender and violence as an intrinsic part of their theorizations about identity and culture. Lopez writes, "If autobiographical narratives form the very foundation of Chicana feminist writing, the Chicana feminist is charged to consider entering that conversation through the terrain of autobiography." Her talk addresses her efforts to work from the intersections of critical theory and personal practice as part of developing a wide ranging matrix for thinking about the ways violence shapes Chicana identity.

- **Dr. Cynthia Stretch**
"Teaching American Literature."
 November 23, 2005

Dr. Cynthia Stretch teaches at the Southern Connecticut University, and is currently Fulbright Professor in the Department of English Philology at the University of Barcelona. She has specialized in the study of masculinities and social class.

The seminar dealt with the methodology for teaching American literature in the United States and, especially, with the contents of the courses she has been given in the last years at Southern Connecticut University.

- **Evelyn C. White**
"The Lives and Writings of African American Women Writers"
 March 23, 2006.

Evelyn C. White, the official biographer of Alice Walker (author of the novel *The Color Purple*), talked about the links between one's life and the writing of black American women writers, especially the case of Alice Walker. White holds masters in journalism and public administration from the Universities of Columbia and Harvard, and has received several awards for her work on African American women in which she

analyzes how gender, race and social class determine the life and the writing of black women. In the seminar White also explored the way in which Alice Walker questions patriarchal parameters of African American masculinity.

6.2 CONFERENCES

- **XXVII AEDEAN Congress**

Salamanca, December 2003

Round Table: "A Men's Studies Approach to American Literature: Theory into Practice"

Panel: "Feminist and Gender Studies"

Participants: Dr. Àngels Carabí, Dr. Rodrigo Andrés, and Josep M. Armengol

Panel "Re-Presentations of Masculinity in Twentieth-Century American Literature." International Conference of the European Association for American Studies (EASS)

Prague, April 2-5, 2004

Title: "America in the Course of Human Events: Presentations and Interpretations."

The panel allowed us to think about the work of masculinity theorists such as Brod, Gilmore, Eng, Segal, Dinshaw, as well as issues concerning the representations of ethnic masculinity in the work of the Chicana playwright Cherríe Moraga.

Participants: Àngels Carabí, Barbara Ozieblo, Josep M. Armengol

- **Symposium "Where Are Men Heading to? Debating Masculinity"**

November 4, 2004, organized by the Barcelona City Council (Council of Women and Civil Rights)

Round Table: "Current Academic Trends on Masculinities." Participants: Victoria Sau "Masculinity As a Mystery"; Josep M. Armengol "Does Masculinity Exist?"; Bill Phillips "Representations of Masculinity in the Detective Novel"; Moderator: Àngels Carabí. Presentation of the video "Debating Masculinity" (Carabí and Armengol).

- **Round Table: "Men by Women. Contemporary American Women Writing About Men"- International AEDEAN Congress**

Valencia, December 2004

This round table analyzed, from a feminist perspective, the representations of masculinity and the relations between genders in contemporary literature written by women, providing a critical approach to traditional patriarchal values which have determined the relationships of oppression of men towards women as well as those of some men towards other men. Participants: Rodrigo Andrés, Àngels Carabí, Bill Phillips, and Cristina Alsina.

- **Panel: "Masculinities and Gender Relations in Contemporary American Women's Literature." Coordinator: Àngels Carabí. *Masculinities, Femininities, and Hybridities*. Spanish Association for American Studies. Jaén, March 16-18, 2005**
- **II Congress on Masculinities**
Organized by the Barcelona City Council (Council of Women and Civil Rights).
Barcelona, June 2-4, 2005.

Activities organized by the research group funded by the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs - "Instituto de la Mujer" Exp. 62/03:

- Opening Conference by Dr. Tanya Dalziell, lecturer in the Department of English, Communication, and Cultural Studies at the University of Western Australia. She is a specialist in the analysis of the construction of the white race in relation to postcolonial and masculinity studies.
- Round tables:
 - "Representations of Masculinity in Literature and Film." Participants: Josep M. Armengol, Cristina Alsina, and Bill Phillips.
 - "Men Written by Women." Participants: Àngels Carabí, Barbara Ozieblo, and Victoria Sau.
- Presentation of the video "Debating Masculinity", which includes interviews to renowned theorists of masculinities from different disciplines. The interviews were carried out in New York by Àngels Carabí and Josep M. Armengol.

- **AEDEAN Round Tables**

Jaén, December 2005

"Re-reading Masculinities and Sexualities in American Culture and Literature" (Àngels Carabí, Josep M. Armengol, María Isabel Seguro);
"Masculinity Studies in Practice: Bringing Masculinity Studies into the Literature Classroom" (Cristina Alsina, Rodrigo Andrés, Barbara Ozieblo, Bill Phillips).

Lynne Segal

"Men After Feminism? What's Left to Say?"

Conference: May 9, 2006

Seminar: May 8, 2006

Lynne Segal, psychologist and a specialist in gender and masculinity studies, is Professor at the University of London. Segal gave a conference and a seminar on the construction of male gender. The studies carried out by Dr. Segal focus on the analysis of gender and masculinity from a feminist and interdisciplinary perspective. Her most outstanding works include *Slow Motion. Changing Masculinities, Changing Men* (1990), *Straight Sex: The Politics of Pleasure* (1994), and *Why Feminism?* (1998).

- **Congress "Gender Studies: Literature in Feminine/Masculine"**

University of Santiago de Compostela, July 13-15, 2006

Screening of the DVD *Debating Masculinity/La masculinidad a debate*. Àngels Carabí (UB) and Josep M. Armengol (UB), eds. Publicacions UB, 2005. The DVD contains the interviews carried out in New York to renowned specialists in the field from different academic disciplines, such as sociology, anthropology, literary and film studies, race/ethnic studies, and studies of sexuality. Michael Kimmel (SUNY), David Gilmore (SUNY), Krin Gabbard (SUNY), David Eng (Rutgers University), and Carolyn Dinshaw (NYU) provide us with their innovating thoughts on the matter.

- **Symposium "Masculinities: A Challenge for the Future." Presentation of the research project "Constructing New Masculinities", and seminar and conference by Michael Kimmel**

October 16-17, 2006

Faculty of Philology - University of Barcelona

The *Center for Women and Literature* of the University of Barcelona, within the framework of the research project "Constructing New Masculinities", directed by Dr. Àngels Carabí, organized the symposium "Masculinities: A Challenge for the Future", in collaboration with the Council of Civil Rights, Barcelona City Council. Dr. Michael Kimmel, one of the most emblematic theorists in the field of masculinity studies, was the principal guest speaker.

Michael Kimmel is the director of the *Center for the Study of Men and Masculinities* (State University of New York at Stony Brook), and author of renowned books such as *Against the Tide: Protofeminist Men in the United States* (1992), *Manhood in America: A Cultural History* (1996), *The Gendered Society* (2000), and *Men and Masculinities: A Social, Cultural and Historical Encyclopedia* (2003). He is also the editor of the international journal *Men and Masculinities* (Sage). Michael Kimmel is a member of the research project "Constructing New Masculinities."

Program

Place: Faculty of Philology, University of Barcelona

October 16:

17h - 19h

Seminar on gender and masculinities by Michael Kimmel

Coordinator: Rodrigo Andrés

October 17:

10h - 11h

- **Presentation of the research project "Constructing New Masculinities" by its members**

The act is presented by Bill Phillips. Participants: Àngels Carabí, Cristina Alsina, Rodrigo Andrés, Josep M. Armengol, Bill Phillips, Isabel Seguro, Marta Bosch (UB)

- **Screening of the DVD *Debating Masculinity*, edited by Àngels Carabí and Josep M. Armengol, with the financial support of the Council of Civil Rights, Barcelona City Council (*Unidad de Audiovisuales*, UB).**

11:00h - 11:30h Coffee break

11:30h - 13h

Aula Magna

- **Conference "The Future of Masculinities" by Michael Kimmel**

Chair: Ms. hon. Pilar Vallgera, Councillor for Civil Rights, Barcelona City Council

Presentation: Josep M. Armengol (UB)

- **AEDEAN Round Tables**

Huelva, December 13-16, 2006

The two round tables will analyze how gender, race, and social class combine in the construction of ethnic masculinities.

"Gender, Race, and Class: Ethnic Masculinities in Contemporary American Literature Written by Women (I)" (Àngels Carabí, moderator, Josep M. Armengol, Cristina Alsina, María Isabel Seguro)

Josep M. Armengol will explore whiteness as an ethnic construction, that is, as a social, historical and political invention, and its relation to the studies of masculinities.

Cristina Alsina will analyze how women writers from the 80s represent the Vietnam War, which had castrating effects for those who fought in the war and experienced extreme changes in their bodies and psyches, as well as for those who did not take part in the fight and were barred from a widely accepted rite of passage to adult manhood: to become a soldier.

María Isabel Seguro will explore Asian American masculinities from the perspective of Asian immigrant women in the United States who had to endure racism as well as different notions of masculinity and gender relations.

Àngels Carabí will make a comparative analysis of the representations of masculinity in texts written by women from different ethnic backgrounds in order to explore how different cultural origins give rise to different ways of acting as a man.

"Gender, Race, and Class: Ethnic Masculinities in Contemporary American Literature Written by Women (II)" (Barbara Ozieblo, moderator, Rodrigo Andrés, Marta Bosch, Bill Phillips)

Rodrigo Andrés will explore how in the works of Jewish American women writers, such as Tillie Olsen (1912 -) and Grace Paley (1922 -), male characters are presented as co-victims of an oppressive system of class, rather than as patriarchal victimizers.

Marta Bosch will take into account notions of gender, class, and ethnicity for examining the ways in which contemporary Arab American women writers such as Diana Abu-Jaber, Elmaz Abinader, Etel Adnan or Mona Simpson articulate representations of Western and Arab masculinity, in relation to their Arab cultural heritage and to the stereotypes of the Arab man in the United States.

Bill Phillips will analyze how the tradition of the American detective novel has reinforced the existing models of white, heterosexual, and middle class masculinity, as well as how alternative models of manhood have appeared.

Barbara Ozieblo will explore the intersections between masculinity and ethnicity in Chicana literature and will analyze the works of Chicana women writers as Cherríe Moraga in order to illustrate how Chicana masculinity is also marked by specificities of race and social class.

6.3 PhD DISSERTATIONS

Doctoral Theses

Author: **Rodrigo Andrés**

Title: **"El poder subversivo del amor entre hombres en la tradición literaria occidental. *Billy Budd, Sailor*"**

Supervisor: Dr. Àngels Carabí

The thesis argues that the American author Herman Melville (1819-1891) is inscribed within a literary tradition of love between men which questions patriarchal values and, potentially, acts as a vehicle for the creation of more egalitarian societies.

Date: March, 2004

Grade: Summa cum laude.

Author: **Josep M. Armengol**

Title: **"Gendering Men: Theorizing Masculinities in American Culture and Literature"**

Supervisor: Dr. Àngels Carabí

The thesis is an introduction to current theories of masculinity studies and the representations of masculinity in American literature.

Date: June 29, 2006

Grade: Summa cum laude.

Author: **Cristina Alsina**

Title: **" 'This Is Just a Story': la ficción como verdad en la obra de Tim O' Brien"**

Supervisors: Francisco Amella Vela and Àngels Carabí

The thesis analyzes the work of Tim O'Brien and his examination of alternative models of masculine identity, which are clearly opposed to violent, imperialist, hegemonic masculinity.

Date: September 26, 2006

Grade: Summa cum laude

7. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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