Anti-Heroes in the Works of Easton Ellis, Coe, Martel and Tsiolkas

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Masculinity in Crisis

By

Panos Gerakis

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To my kind father Stelios Gerakis

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INTRODUCTION

March, 2015: a 19-year-old boy goes missing from the Dairy Vocational School dormitories at the University of Ioannina, Northern Greece, and is eventually found dead in the area of Lake Pamvotida, almost a kilometer away from the university campus. According to the press, the boy committed suicide after extreme verbal and physical harassment by his fellow students, because of his timid temperament and "softness". Witness reports revealed constant bullying and physical torment, such as being pushed down the stairs, suffocation by belt and physical attacks in the showers. Stories on social media by the young man's peers, as well as the bullies themselves (who went public on social media after the discovery of the body), revealed another aspect of the crime that had less to do with the victim's shyness and a lot more with his being "effeminate", a "poofter", a "lesser version of a man"—a detail that was never officially publicized in Greek media. Almost four years later, the abettors from Rethymnon, Crete (the same area where Vangelis—the unlucky young man—came from) were brought to justice but were only charged with minor offences: a few months' imprisonment and financial penalties. The reported incident is only one of many[1] that frequently shake local and national societies internationally, bringing forth the issue of violence exerted by men on men, urging us to think of why one's manliness, or "lack" thereof, can be reason enough for the loss of life. Different categories of men exert, or receive, different degrees of violence, and this extends far beyond the issue of sexual orientation.

To explain phenomena such as violence and hegemony that emerge among men (and women), we probably need to understand first what it means "to be a man". What we understand as a "man" today is a rather complex, multifaceted term that has thankfully rendered obsolete simplistic ideas of the past that saw man as the mere binary opposite of woman. However, as Nancy Lindisfarne and Jonathan Neale have claimed, we are now faced

[1] Homophobic assaults obviously constitute the most prominent form of violence against men. According to the FRA LGTB 2013 survey, 26% of LGTB people in Europe have been attacked or threatened with violence, while 17% of those incidents remain unreported (*www.lgtbhatecrime.eu*). The Orlando gay club shooting is a notorious case from June 2016 (*www.edition.cnn.com*).

with a paradox: the fact that "while many people will recognize that gendered identities are taught and learned ('socially constructed'), these same people may, in the next moment, describe the world in terms of the labels 'men' and 'women' as if we all know what these words mean" (Lindisfarne and Neale, 2016, 36). It seems that, as our perceptions of identity are still centered around these two terms, our idealizations and anathemas are also centered around schemata like "man enough" or "not man enough". Even though scholarly thinking has progressed towards a more deconstructed definition of gender and the demolition of dualisms, popular belief still oscillates between the portrait of *L' Éternel Masculin*[2]—well-established by biological determinism—and the constructivist view that being a man is a fluid, constructed vision, and there is no such thing as universal masculinity. The question that arises is the following: if masculinity is considered as either biological and fixed or fluid and constructed, why does it constitute, at the same time, an area of dispute, either through the violence we see in football matches or the ambivalence we often see portrayed in modern fiction and drama? Why does the term "masculinity crisis", as well as the question "where did all men go?", continue to resonate within all discourse and analysis in a modern man's world? To complicate matters further, even if one were of the conviction that "a man is a man, no matter what", they would still have to admit that the face of masculinity has changed, as we shall shortly see, and even more so in today's neoliberal era which is tightly interwoven with globalization and constant mobility.

This is a study about any kind of identity within the extremely wide and volatile category of what we understand as "masculinity" or "masculinities". Lindisfarne and Neale suggest that in order to understand masculinities we need to consider class relations, confrontations among various masculinities, comparisons between men and women, and of course to look comparatively across cultures and time (Lindisfarne and Neale, 2016, 36). It is a fact—as Andrea Cornwall has suggested in *Masculinities Under Neoliberalism*—that over the last few decades a significant and growing body of scholarly work has developed around men's studies: "it has become standard for gender studies to include the study of men and masculinities, and for policy-related work on gender to address 'men and boys' as part of achieving gender equality" (Cornwall, 2017, 2). However, most academic work related to men and masculinities took place after the 1990s, while almost no attention had been paid to masculinities prior to the 1970s. It is thanks to the second-wave feminist movement of the

[2] A work by Jacqueline Kelen published 1994.

1960s–1980s that issues concerning masculinities were also raised, preparing the field for academic discourse and a more articulate body of research dedicated exclusively to men. It seems that discussing men had been a thorny issue up to the 1970s, hidden, as it were, underneath the hard shell of patriarchy, which had been informing societies, silencing at the same time any attempt to discuss the vulnerable core of "what it takes to be a man". The latter is no easy task. This is what the present book aspires to do: discuss men and masculinities today; discuss the struggle to prove one's self and the shame that comes from "masculine" failure—the guilt, the imposed silence and the healing that one seeks when they cannot make it in the tough arena of what we call masculinity today; and discuss all of the above within the dominant context of a globalized society, itself already an anxiety-inducing element.

To Be a Man Today

Discussing men today entails discussing masculinities within globalization. However, even though globalization, which stands for cultural uniformity, is an undisputed phenomenon, there is still no single model of masculinity that fits all. It would be safe to suggest that though, when it comes to western, or a westernized, civilization, we are able to distinguish common patterns of behavior and cultural schemata, especially if we consider the power of a common linguistic code to discuss identities, even among subjects from different geographic locations. For this reason, I have chosen to discuss masculinities through the analysis of four literary works by four authors of the same generation but coming from four different major "western" societies in the anglophone world. These are Bret Easton Ellis from the U.S.A., Jonathan Coe from Britain, Yann Martel from Canada and Christos Tsiolkas from Australia. Through their protagonists, all four authors discuss men and foreground the struggle and anxiety that comes with the effort of being a man, or, in other words, the masculine crisis of their day and age, i.e., our own era of rampant globalization. Of course, when discussing a topic as extensive and complicated as masculinities one should also include several variables of masculinity such as race, religion, attitudes, politics and disability. None of these should be ignored, but in order to discuss the crisis factor in a more controlled way, I had to limit these variables to geography alone, focusing on four white masculinities, among which there are a transnational and a diasporic one. To be fair, and also to be able to offer a comprehensive analysis, one should include all sorts of masculinities, such as black, Asian and Arab, to name but a few. However, such an analysis would result in a gigantic

study that would never be completed, and with innumerable issues left unanswered. Besides, it would not be fair to the material itself merely to include a chapter on a novel with black or other race masculinities just for the sake of inclusion. Not including, in this case, definitely does not mean excluding. Besides, discussing and analyzing a specific type of masculinity would not be possible with only one novel, and this would again mean excluding other masculinities that deserve equal attention. I see this study as the beginning of a long journey of mapping masculinities globally, with the authors themselves and the issues they raise as a criterion of choice. It is also no coincidence that specific fields of study are dedicated to specific issues, and thus it is no coincidence that Black Studies have been dedicated to black lives and Queer Studies have effectively addressed the lives and rights of queer identities.

This, then, is the starting point on a journey, delving into what one would call "unmarked" (on a first glance) masculinities. The goal of this study is to bring together masculinities from different angles and situations as depicted in the four novels, and to compare them in order to shed light on today's masculinity crisis. The posited idea is that, even though at present masculinity holds a multitude of connotations and interpretations, it has not yet managed to free itself from the ghost of patriarchy, which, transformed and veiled in the face of globalization, continues to exert pressure on men's lives, producing new hegemonies with serious repercussions for masculine integrity, and often creating victims of a new crisis. It seems then—as it will become apparent in the course of this book—that no men's lives are left unmarked, whether gay or straight, black or white, latino or northern american.

Even though in the following chapters globalization is not always examined as the direct culprit of the anxious subjectivities of masculinities, it will always be purposefully discussed as the back-set and standard variable in the characters' condition and identity. Four chapters emerge—one dedicated to each author—which discuss different versions of masculinity and the masculine crisis in the fictional lives of the protagonists. A common axis in all four novels is the idea of hegemony and subordination in the face of "Cultural Hegemony"—a term introduced by Antonio Gramsci in his *Prison Notebooks* (written 1920–1935) and further elaborated and re-invented in the mid-1990s by Australian scholar Raewyn W. Connell as "Hegemonic Masculinity". The characters as masculinities in the novels either take on the position of the sovereign or that of the subordinate. At other times, they shift from one role to the other or even project their idealizations and masculine defeats on those roles. Thus, in

Bret Easton Ellis's *American Psycho* (1991), the central character, Patrick Bateman, constitutes a hegemonic masculinity that forms part of "Transnational Business Masculinities"—a term coined by Connell (2005). The extreme sexual violence in the novel examines a psychopath serial killer as a metaphor for toxic masculinity. The omnipresence of commodification as a constituent of the character as masculinity will be examined as a defining element of both subjectivity and crisis through "The Thing Theory" developed by Bill Brown (2001). Maxwell Sim is another case of masculinity in crisis and the main character in Jonathan Coe's novel *The Terrible Privacy of Maxwell Sim* (2010). Maxwell's subordinate masculinity, as he embarks on a journey under the million circuits developed by today's global commerce and technology, is the extreme opposite of Bateman's business masculinity: his background of post-imperial Britain stands in complete contrast to the apotheosis of aggressive U.S. capitalism in the yuppie era. Maxwell's voyage to the North of England is a business quest, but, even more so, a venture into masculine pride. Soon, though, his idealizations about masculinity as a compass to his journey prove him wrong and his reconciliation with his latent homosexuality is the only area in which he, finally, finds peace. What is examined in the novel is not only masculinity as navigation and adventure within a world whose technological capacities for surveillance exclude the possibility of adventure and growth, but also as "performativity" in the words of Judith Butler (1993; 2000; 2011) who sees gender as a construct and has been outspoken about this artificiality. Yann Martel's anonymous character in the transnational novel *Self* (1996) occupies the third chapter in this study. The character's sex-hopping androgyny enables discourse on the fluid nature of gender and masculinity, and on whether androgyny as a metaphor for alternative masculinities can ever negotiate or survive within the powerful regime of fixed gendered schemata. And finally, Christos Tsiolkas's novel *Barracuda* (2013) brings forth the idea of diasporic masculinities and the ideal of the Olympic Games, not only as a synecdoche of globalization but also as a claustrophobic carceral. Michel Foucault's ideas on discipline and the carceral will play a two-fold role in the analysis, helping us elaborate the fictional carceral depicted in the novel but also explain masculinity and Olympism as carcerals themselves.

Even though these four authors have received attention and acknowledgement for their work, and even though their novels and central characters have been approached from various angles by previous scholars, it appears that there has been little attention paid to the characters as masculinities in crisis in their present time. Furthermore, there has been no attempt to bring the novels together as works produced by authors of the same generation.

Berthold Schoene (2008) has approached the male character in *American Psycho* as a case study of crisis as symptom and Martin Weinreich (2004) has examined the character's crisis as one equated with existential chaos. Martel's *Self* has attracted some literary criticism as a feminist novel, at most, while Jonathan Coe's character, Maxwell Sim, has not been approached as a character in a masculinity crisis. Finally, Christos's Tsiolkas's Danny Kelly in *Barracuda* has been examined as a diasporic identity, while Nikos Papastergiadis (2016) has paid a closer look by discussing the character's existential tensions. Besides, with the exception of *American Psycho,* those four novels are among the least acknowledged novels of their authors. As a result, they have received less scholarly attention compared to the other major works of the four authors. This is the challenge, and also a goal, of the present book: to discuss masculinity as a state of crisis induced by globalization by bringing together these two ideas (masculinity crisis and globalization) along with four authors of the global anglophone ring—a merging that the idea of globalization itself would permit anyway.

Understanding Masculinity: A Short Socio-historic Overview

It is difficult to be a man, let alone, a "good" man or a "real" man. It has even been very difficult for culture to describe what a man is or to establish an ontology regarding masculinities. It has also been impossible to provide global definitions of masculinity. Even limiting the inquiry within western concepts about what a man is, or about masculinity, does not provide any fixity. Elisabeth Badinter, in the introduction of her work *XY, de l'Identité Masculine,* articulates the problematics around the affirmation of maleness by asking: "Que' est-ce qu' un homme?" (Badinter, 1995, 17). Being a man is not a valid term *per se*, as it all comes down to the issue of being "a real man": "duty", "proof" and "testing" are the terms that demonstrate a man's painful work of producing and performing their manliness, that is, masculinity (Ibid., 19). Badinter suggests that two elements have been added to a modern man's agony of proving their maleness: first, the post-modernist loss of every center of ideology in the 20th century, which has made it impossible for a man to define a concrete self (Ibid., 19); and, second, feminism, which is for many to "blame" for the destabilization of gender roles (Ibid., 20). What follows in this section is a short socio-historical overview of the understandings of masculinities and an attempt to bring together the two realities that preoccupy the present research: the idea of globalization and the masculine crisis.

In much of social and feminist theory masculinity "defines the way in which the world is organized materially and perceived psychologically, and hence the dominant representations of events and experiences are forged from a masculine perspective" (Frosh, 1995, 220). According to David Buchbinder in his 2013 book *Studying Men and Masculinities*, contemporary discourse on notions of gender (hence masculinity) can be traced back to the 17th and early 18th centuries. The passage from agrarian life to an urban industrial economy seems to have had a significant impact on family structures and perceptions of gender (Buchbinder, 5). Several attempts to theorize gender have emerged since the development of genetics and the history of nature, "drawing parallels between the human species and animals in terms of social and sexual or reproductive behaviors and social organization" (Ibid., 29). Those belong to the category of essentialist theorizations: Darwin's theory of evolution in *On The Origin of Species*, published in the mid-19th century (1859), is a typical example of this. Whereas essentialist theories situate gender in the material body and relate it to physiological factors (such as hormones) and the history of species development, constructionist theories that appeared in the 20th century "postulated that there are social and cultural influences that operate in, and around, such material factors as the body, whatever its evolutionary history" (Buchbinder, 2013, 31). While essentialist approaches sought to steer gender into certain channels of definition, constructionist theories at least "leave space for reformations of gender to occur" (Ibid., 32). The "nature versus nurture" debate left an impact on perceptions of gender up until contemporary theories of ideology were formulated (derived from Marxist and, later, Foucauldian views on power distribution in the capitalist era).

According to Raewyn Connell, the contemporary study of masculinity as a scientific account might be said to begin with Sigmund Freud and his observations on psycho-sexual development in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Freud never discussed masculinity systematically, even though the issue of gendered identities has been ongoing in his career as a psychoanalyst through the "Oedipus complex" and the son-father rivalry leading to the fear of castration.[3] The psychoanalytic construction of gender identity in early childhood unveiled, in a new and revealing manner, the precarious nature of masculinity via the traumatic experience of the Oedipal complex and its disruptive passing (Connell, 2005b, 12). Freud's typical schema of childhood development highlights the Oedipus

[3] Mainly discussed in his 1905 work *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, as well as his case studies "Little Hans" and "Rat Man" of 1909.

complex occurring during the "phallic stage", as the first developmental structure manifesting sexuality that results in a masculine gender identification (Freud, 1960, 27–29).

Picking up from Freud, Swiss psychiatrist Carl Gustav Jung theorized the bipolarity between male and female as an archetypal schema and read the feminine as inherent within male archetypes. In his work *Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious* (Part I, vol. 9), he claims that, regarding the gender archetypes residing in the collective unconscious of every individual, there is the *anima*—the feminine aspect of all men—and the *animus*, the masculine aspect within all women too, each deriving from prior rapport with close female (mother) or male (father, uncle) figures (Jung, 1990, 59). For men, the *anima* remains extremely resistant to consciousness and requires a lot of courage to identify with, as, in Jung's view, it leads a man astray from societal and moral expectations. When the *anima* is "strongly constellated, it softens the man's character and makes him touchy, irritable, moody, jealous, vain and unadjusted", always in a state of "discontent" (Ibid., 70).

Alfred Adler, doctor and president of the Psychoanalytic Society in Vienna (1911), was the one to introduce the notion of the "masculine protest" and place masculine anxiety, as well as the masculine-feminine bipolar, in debate within a more radical psychoanalytic context. According to this, "children of both sexes, being weak *vis-à-vis* adults, are thus forced to inhabit the feminine position" (Connell, 2005b, 16). They develop perceptions of femininity and doubts about their ability to access masculinity. "The 'childish vague judgments' about the masculine/feminine polarity persist as a motive in later life" (Adler 70–77). If this struggle leads to feelings of inferiority, the subject develops an agony for idealization and exaggerated masculine perfection as well as "overcompensation on the masculine aspect of things in a man's adult life" (Adler 1964, 70–77). Adler saw this drive as a neurotic artifice.

The list of psychoanalysts, as well as clinical and existential psychotherapists, who approached gender is not short, yet French psycholinguist Jacques Lacan in the middle of the 20th century stands out as the one who placed gender within the realm of the "Symbolic Order". His conception of this invisible supervising power is considered seminal. For Lacan, Oedipal repression creates a system of symbolic order monitored by the "Law-of-the-Father". The idea of a "phallus" to be castrated according to the Oedipal myth, as seen by Freud, is central here (Lacan, 2013, 68). Signification lies in the "phallus", and the distinction between "being" and

"having" the "phallus" is crucial before gender identification (Lacan, 2006, 581–82). Lacan distinguishes among three functions of the Oedipal father: the "Real", which refers to the father as sperm and biological object-cause for reproduction; the "Symbolic", which refers to the father when he manifests in speech and language; and finally the "Imaginary" father as an imago, a set of all the imaginary constructs that constitute the image of a father-figure. The paternal metaphor is very important to Lacan. The "Law" is introduced by the Father (Ibid., 582). The Lacanian subject constitutes part of the Symbolic order in which the normative and prohibitive function of the "Father" opens up to a chain of discourse, that is, all signification and therefore existence within the symbolic order (Lacan, 2013, 29). Both the Symbolic and Imaginary "Father" as invigilation are very important in the process of not only constituting but also regulating masculinities and keeping them in conformity with the "Law". However, according to Stephen Frosh, behind traditional views of masculinity, such as power destined from anatomy, lurks some lack of self-definition, incoherence and false stability built on denial of weakness and dependence: Victor J. Seidler (1989) claims that "Masculinity is an essentially negative identity, defining itself against emotionality and connectedness: an essentially negative identity which is not filled with phallic power, but something built around a flight from something else" (qtd. in Frosh, 1995, 222–23).

Despite the a-chronic dimension of the psychoanalytic accounts in relation to masculinity, examined here within a very specific millennial time frame, and the criticisms that Freudian-Lacanian psychoanalysis has received as being scientifically outdated, this perspective, still, cannot be neglected in the present study. The post-modern theories concerning gender that followed were based to a great extent on the above psychoanalytic insights, or at least, frequently referred to them. Lynne Segal, too, in her work *Slow Motion: Changing Masculinities, Changing Men*, claims that all contemporary guarantees of coherent and unbroken masculinity lie in the promise of Freudian phallic power (Segal, 1990, 102).

In tandem with the development of psychoanalysis, a sociological mapping of gender identities through "gender roles" has been developing alongside, where anatomical/biological sexual differences are seen as primarily providing material for the formation of functional gender roles in society. The "Role Theory" developed in the 1930s conceived masculinity as the opposite of femininity; the masculine role was constituted on a set of characteristics such as "'roughness, self-reliance and courage versus their

exact opposites that were addressed to the feminine role'; Gender personality could be evaluated simply by calculating whether one exhibited a surplus of either masculine or feminine features" (Edley and Wetherell, 2000, 100–01). As Connell mentions regarding this theoretical view:

> For the most part, the first generation of role theorists assumed that the roles were well-defined, that socialization went ahead harmoniously, and that sex role learning was a thoroughly good thing. Internalized sex roles contributed to social stability, mental health and the performance of necessary social functions. To put it formally, functionalist theory assumed a concordance among social institutions, sex role norms and actual personalities. (Connell, 2005b, 23)

However, societal complexity was soon recognized as reflecting on gender as well: within this spectrum of the "social relations" perspective on men, masculinity was seen as a "set of distinctive practices that emerge from men's positioning within a variety of social structures, such as work and the family" (Connell, 2005b, 102). Intense focus was placed on the social positioning of men *vis-à-vis* class distinctions, as well as the impact of capitalism upon individuals, "with men exhibiting more aggression and competitiveness, feeling oppressed or non-motivated, depending on their status in the scale of the productive line" (Ibid., 103).

The safe maintenance of heterosexual normality, as a common practice to affirm masculinity, had to keep destabilizing threats at bay. The Kinsey Scale, published in 1948, is a good instance of such a challenge, an attempt to scale and thus define sexual orientation by rating heterosexuality from "0" (absolutely heterosexual) to "6" (absolutely homosexual). Its findings about the multiplicity of gender identities and behaviors went against the traditional idea that "a sane body would be a productive, manly body avoiding any kind of feminine mannerisms. The valorization of the idealized perfectible body had arguably generated intolerance towards non-normative body types—a situation with profound implications for the subjectivities of men" (Petersen, 1998, 51). Elizabeth Stephens in her article "Male Bodies" poses another dilemma, this time for "valorized" masculinity, claiming that "traditionally, male bodies—especially white, heterosexual male bodies—have been subjected to an act of double erasure": the first erasure emerges from the projection of norms onto a generalized idea of a "body", which is considered to be fixed as a construct, and then, "this corporeality", that allows no discourse as masculinity, occupies the position of reason and rationality (Stephens, 2007, 5). This explains how the body had at that time established a

phantasmal surface of projection and established more abstract projections, namely, maleness, masculinity, hegemony, normativity.

Alan Petersen in his book *Unmasking the Masculine*, in the line of thought initiated by American philosopher Judith Butler (to be explored below), examines why some male bodies "matter more than others": "Although western discourse on masculinity tends to take as given the materiality of the male sexed body upon which a male gender is inscribed, the very materiality of the body can be seen to be an artifact of the modern discourses through which it is represented" (Petersen, 1998, 42). What matters in this case are the different constitutional categories and the complex ways in which those interact or compete with each other, serving in stabilizing or de-stabilizing, supporting, excluding or marginalizing. Looking back, one would claim that the male body and identity had been constantly re-evaluated and re-idealized. The muscular body type, equated with strength, assertiveness and dominance (an idea that has survived since antiquity, typically instilled in the military and the stereotypically "macho" sports), went hand in hand with the "body at work", which became synonymous with the breadwinner's role during the rise of capitalism, and until the mid-20th century.

That second half of the 20th century was the moment when the breadwinner identity was seriously challenged by women entering the workforce. Despite the generally limiting, narrow view of the Sex Roles approach, the elaboration on gender inequalities and general imposition of fixed perceptions about gender on bodies, led to the opening towards new structuralist approaches to gender, with "sex" being finally replaced by gender (Risman and Davis, 2016, 4). It was between the 1950s and the late 1970s, through more explicit ideas on gender roles put forth by the Women's Liberation Movement, that fixed perceptions on sex and gender, including masculinity, were questioned and destabilized: the idea of oppression becomes central to the issue of gender roles, as well as the confinements or impositions placed by prescribed gender roles on the "self".

The questioning of the normative Sex Role Theory—that is, the adjustment of self to, and identity construction via compliance with, socially-enforced sex role norms—led to the admittance that not only gender roles but also social norms are not fixed, as they change or become challenged, violated and subject to evolution. The 1980s brought about their own "political agenda" for masculinities according to Jonathan Rutherford in his book *Men's Silences* (1992, 63). He notes that personal and sexual relationships

were renegotiated and new metaphors, images and discourses for masculine identities were created. These changes were brought about by consumerism and the new markets. According to Rutherford, terms like "toy boy, new man, new father, lager lout, the yuppie" constituted a "mixture of sexual, familial and economic identities, that existed during the contradictory structural changes that characterized the decade" (Ibid., 64). A lot of skepticism emerged over this "new man" and the new representations of men, especially in urban settings, which put traditional gender roles at stake. Rutherford continues: "With the lack of any comprehensive statistical data, commentary focused on the new representations of masculinity and on simple anecdote and conjecture. There was a feeling that changes were in the air, yet no one could actually put their finger on what these were" (Ibid., 64). Barbara J. Risman and Georgian Davis, based on research in the workforce from the 1980s and 1990s (by Epstein 1988; Tilly 1999; Gerson 1985), saw gender as a "deception" rather than a reality, and supported a "new gender-neutral structuralist argument, according to which the same structural conditions create behavior, regardless of whether men or women are filling the social roles" (Risman and Davis, 2016, 6). Men have been acknowledged as changing ever since and, with this change, new role models for men have emerged. According to Kimmel, "those have not replaced older ones, but have grown alongside them, creating a dynamic tension between ambitious breadwinner and compassionate father, between macho seducer and loving companion, between Rambo and Phil Donahue" (Kimmel, 1987, 9). It is a fact, of course, that western men today are involved in household activities a lot more than they used to, are allowed to exhibit a wider spectrum of emotions, and pay a lot more attention to their physical and emotional health, while in the past all these would have been unthinkable for a "real man".

Along with men, the study of masculinities has been changing as well, and men, rather than being the normative gender as seen above, have finally become objects of study themselves: "Masculinity now is to be treated, not as a normative referent against which standards are assessed, but as a problematic gender construct" (Kimmel, 1987, 10). Differences emerging within social and cultural groups (e.g., race, class, sexual orientation), as well as other questions triggered by the Gay Liberation Movement since 1969, have underlined the problematics around hegemonic masculinity and the "unmarked 'ideal norm' from which all otherness had been judged as inferior deviations" (Wright, 2005, 243). The assumption of a gender not-taken-for-granted and issues arising among maleness, masculinity and the biological body as confronted with the inscribed body, are now

radically discussed by scholars, but also outside academia. The study of queer masculinities is opening onto new territories, with new identities bringing further rupture with traditional knowledge of masculinities.

Two of the most influential contributions to this radical change of inquiry on masculinity in the late-20th century have been Michel Foucault's theorization of power/knowledge/hegemony and Judith Butler's work on gender performativity. In the present study too, the ideas of these two major theorists will serve as tools for placing the masculinities of fictional characters within the context of issues arising from gender identities in today's globalized society.

In the mid-1970s, Michel Foucault offered a view of embodied subjectivities and the notions of hegemony and control, particularly pertinent to capitalism power mechanisms operant in globalized practices today. He tried to demonstrate how the body is disciplined within the sociocultural structures and how it constitutes a surface of control which is exerted on behalf of social institutions. Foucault also distinguishes some of the principal features of power in relation to sex and gender. He enumerates "the negative relation" (never establishing any connection between power and sex that is not negative: rejection, exclusion, refusal, blockage, concealment or masking); "the insistence of the rule" (power being essentially what dictates its law to sex); "the cycle of prohibition" (power employing prohibitions regarding sexual/gender behavior); "the logic of censorship" (preventing existence of the non-normative); and "the uniformity of the apparatus" (power exercised at all levels) (Foucault, 1998, 83–85). Foucault supports that "power" should not be seen superficially as a set of rules and institutions exerted on society. He claims that power is neither a structure nor an institution: power is "omnipresent", produced everywhere and addressed towards all directions, both intentional and non-subjective (Ibid., 94).

The beginning of the 19th century, according to Foucault, opened the way to new technologies, perceptions and politics about sex. "The will to knowledge" turned flesh into body and definitions of sex shifted towards self-affirmation rather than discipline and punishment. Via the "Repressive Hypothesis", Foucault links repression imposed on sexuality discourse through power and knowledge as coinciding with the development of capitalism in the Victorian era, restricting it thus to a domain of discipline (Foucault, 1998, 6). Sex became institutionalized; an object of administration under analysis and scrutiny. This led to new specifications of the individual and an establishment of "a new *raison d'être* and a natural order

of disorder" (Ibid., 44) via classifications of sexual types and the medicalization of the sexually deviant (Ibid., 48–49). What emerges is a *Scientia Sexualis* in the 18th and 19th centuries that placed sexuality within the framework of "interrogation, medicalization, recording and filing, study, clinical codification, exploration, interpretation" (Ibid., 73). In other words, gender became capital. For Foucault, the final step was the rise of capitalism, leading to "Bio-Power", that is, a focus on the body as a regulating and normalizing power over life and not as a ground for punishing and condemning actions, though still as a theatre of control (Ibid., 40–41).

From the above one can infer what this control exerted on bodies would mean for both individual and collective femininities and masculinities. Particularly for men, discipline, regulation and control over the body would mean creation and maintenance of a particular economy of masculinity without the minimum space for deviation from the established norm: from the unspoken to the strictly articulated, from the medically regulated body to the body-machine of production, masculinity was to be seen as a fixed, indisputable reality to be confronted with its contemporary social regimes. At present, however, power comes from global directions: "Seeping down into the very capillaries of our bodies, power is multiple, situational, relational, strategic and variegated. Power is everywhere, in pockets of resistance, as well as in repressive policies. True to Foucault's analysis, it is knowledge that will enable our bodies to become fat-burning machines" (Chanter, 2006, 61).

Foucault's analysis has also extended to femininities and the control exerted over the female body (Bartky 1990; Hammonds 1997; qtd. in Chanter, 2006, 62). However, the following questions arise: "how" is this "Bio-Power" inscribed on men's bodies today in the post-capitalist era, under which impositions is it called to function upon, what purposes is it asked to serve, and how does it help to shape or regulate masculinities when the bodies are not seen as given, natural objects but "assume their shape and characteristics in cultural practices of power"? (Oksala, 2013, 87) At this point, it is worth quoting Stuart Hall and his observation that "the body has served as a kind of suture, pinning back together the fragmented postmodern subject; the body holds together in one space/time location the many different subject positionings of the postmodern subject" (qtd. in Cranny-Francis, 2003, 91). Nevertheless, Hall places great attention to the importance of representations, especially textual representations of every kind. He notes that identities are constituted within, not outside, representation and he claims that the boundaries of

patriarchal heteronormativity have not only led to misrepresentations of the composition of society but have also constrained the formation of subjectivity and identity within a very narrow range of representations (Cranny-Francis, 2003, 92). For redress to be made, a new, global range of representations must be invoked.

Discussion on bodies and representation, or else, the "body as gender" and "gender as representation", would lead to the post-feminist Judith Butler and her radical ideas on gender performativity. Butler's notion that sex(ual) identity is not exclusively biological or natural uncovers the workings of a matrix of compulsory heterosexuality in western societies, with orthodox readings of anatomical differences receiving particular cultural significance so as to designate the "natural" male and "natural" female, establishing thus a heteronormative bipolar relation and identifying sexuality with identity (Butler, 2007, xii, xxxi). In her own words, "If gender is culturally constructed, gender is neither the casual result of sex nor as seemingly fixed as sex. The unity of the subject is thus already potentially contested by the distinction that permits of gender as a multiple interpretation of sex" (Ibid., 8). Thus, she contends that there is no reason to assume that genders "ought to remain as two" (Ibid., 9). The binary sex-gender appears restricting, while gender should be approached as a surface open to interpretations and assumptions, a "free-floating artifice, with the consequence that man and masculine might just as easily signify a female body as a male one, and woman and feminine a male body as easily as a female one" (Ibid., 9). She seeks thus to deconstruct gender and disrupt the linkage in western culture that sees sexuality as a fundamental constituent of identity, regulating it through the dominant institutions of social and political life.

When the discussion comes to masculinities and men, how is the masculine subject to be formed within this institutionalized framework? "If gender is a cultural construct, where and how does this construction take place and under what limitations and cultural possibilities?" (Ibid., 11–12). Butler claims that "what the person 'is', and, indeed, what gender 'is', is always relative to the constructed relations in which it is determined". In other words, what one would name "gendered identity" is a set of characteristics that would produce coherence and continuity only within certain instituted norms of intelligibility (Ibid., 23). Thus, masculinities would every time be constituted within the specific sociocultural framework of their time. Butler takes occasion from Foucault's notions about power and hegemony exerted on subjects by institutions, in combination with the notion of "interpellation" or "hailing"

introduced by Louis Althusser, and Lacan's ideas on the prohibitions imposed by the "Big Other" or the relationship between the subject and the Law of the Father (Butler, 2011, 81–82), to discuss the prohibitive or restrictive forces exerted on gender and, for this occasion, masculinities. In any case—and if it has been already claimed by the above theoretical framework that the idea of "power" is placed at the center of most ideas on men, if institutions have been claimed to be of "masculine gender"—it is power again that is looked at when attempting to understand masculinities at present. This means that we should be looking at power derived by men and at the same time addressed to, or, exerted over men as well. Accordingly, it becomes interesting to examine, via readings of fictional male representations, how different categories of men, in their struggle for self-idealization and the acquisition of their manly ideal through performing masculinity, are often thrown off balance by a fluid, globalized context.

Butler considers identification and its failures as crucial to the thinking of hegemony: "We consider how it is that those who are oppressed by certain operations of power also come to be invested in that oppression, and how, in fact, their very self-definition becomes bound up with the terms by which they are regulated, marginalized, or erased from the sphere of cultural life" (Butler, et al., 2000, 149). Identification thus becomes multi-faceted and not solely bound to a single-term identity. However, despite the attempts of regulating control (as previously supported by Foucault), it is important in political life that the individual must not only "figure out about his or her psyche and its investment but also investigate what kinds of identifications are made possible, are fostered and compelled, within a given political field, and how certain forms of instability are opened up within that political field by virtue of the process of identification itself" (Ibid., 150). In this context, globalized instability can be seen in more fertile grounds, opening up to new possibilities of identities that break free from traditional hegemonic impositions of control and restrictions on behalf of well-established norms.

Through Foucault and Butler we have come at the start of the 21st century to the point of justifiably asking, like Jeff Hearn in his article "Is Masculinity Dead? A Critique of the Concept of Masculinity/Masculinities", whether masculinity is dead or not (Hearn, 2000, 202). As "calls for masculinity to be 'redefined', 'reconstructed', 'dismantled' or 'transformed' become common" (Ibid., 207), Hearn claims that more attention should be paid to what men "do" rather than what masculinity "is", that is, to what men's "material practices" are (Ibid., 208), an approach suited to a cross-examination within a global capitalist system: "certainly to *begin* the

analysis of men with masculinity/masculinities, or to search for the existence of masculinity/masculinities is likely to miss the point. It cannot be assumed *a priori* that masculinity/masculinities exist. To do so is to reproduce a heterosexualizing of social arrangements" (Ibid., 214). Finally, Hearn suggests a more precise usage of the term "masculinities"—or preferably, return to the term "men" rather than "masculinities"—and, further attention to "men's practices", "men's relations" as well as the multiplicity of discourses of masculinity or "multiple masculinities" (Ibid., 214).

A final point: given the fact that globalization is enabled not merely by commerce but also by the technologies that link the planet tighter than ever, it is important to bring this dimension to the discussion, and in particular cyberspace, social media, virtual identities and virtual politics. The myriad cultural transformations occurring because of the galloping technology and the new identities and communities shaped within cyberspace have introduced new dilemmas and questions concerning the "Self". The physical body expands over new possibilities when becoming a virtual body, and if the body as discussed above is a portal of identity, then the virtual body should be discussed as one too. Is gender "performed" or "parodied" under different terms in this era of post-human cyber identities? Is it controlled or hegemonized under the same regimes as those of the Foucaldian "Bio-politics" exerted over them? As previously mentioned, identity to date is almost synonymous to rupture with anything concrete or traditionally known, reconstituting grounds for new perceptions of it. Postmodern cultural analyses of cyberspace "characterize it as fragmented and excessively connected" (Vasseleu, 1997, 48), therefore, examining digital representations of (re- and un-) gendered bodies not only in the way in which they are "produced" but also in ways in which they are "negotiated" (Green, 1997, 59)—or, in the words of Judith Butler, parodied, "cyber-performed". Furthermore, fragmentation and connectivity need to be factored in:

> Cybernetic interaction replaces and excludes the incommensurability of materially constituted spaces. Represented in visualized space, the material has no claim to the space of its own definition, while its vacant potency is a matter of free negotiation and manipulation in the electronic matrix of virtual space. (Vasseleu, 1997, 55)

Accordingly, Paul James and Freya Carkeek in their article "This Abstract Body: From Embodied Symbolism to Techno-Disembodiment", introduce the term "techno-disembodiment" as a practice explaining those new identities and social relations. They bring their analysis to sexual practices

as bodily practices and what they observe is "an increasing abstraction of the way we live our bodies and a generalizing of the technological mediation of social relations" (James and Carkeek, 1997, 107). However, they also observe the following paradox: that despite today's late capitalism culture and the overly preoccupation with the body and the outer shell "our relationship with our bodies is being mediated and penetrated to its core by a myriad of technological incursions". At the same time "our relationship to others is becoming dominated by increasingly disembodied modes of social engagement" (Ibid., 107). In other words, despite stressed preoccupation with the physical body and the self, social relationships tend to become all the more disembodied. However, the paradox does not stop here: according to the above mentioned article, and despite the fact that the body is a universal, taken-for-granted surface of cohesion as entity, "techno-disembodiment" that occurs during activities in the cyber world (such as cybersex or socializing via social networks) needs to depend exactly on this taken-for-granted-ness of the body itself (Ibid., 109). This way, the body continues to work as a medium of identification, but the abstract, symbolic incarnations it receives open up to less concrete identities because of the infinite semantic polysemy of our postmodernism. The authors claim that the need for identification continues to exist. The depth of in-group connections though seems to weaken, creating amorphous masses: "Embodiment is most pregnant with meaning, firstly when the universalizing (more abstract) modalities qualify without annulling the differentiating, exclusionary, inward-turned and more concrete modalities of symbolically linking the community to a body" (Ibid., 113). In this way, one would understand that the body is always there as a (phantom of a) concrete structure, opening up to the abstract practices of disembodiment in globalized virtual realities; concrete enough to be managed as restrained to its limits, abstract enough and amorphous to be regulated via globalized biopolitics:

> The body has been abstracted as a malleable form. It remains important to the constitution of identity, but more as the constructed image through which the self is presented to others than as a locus of the simultaneous connection and separation from others. The experience is one of an individualized tension—the disembodied embodiment in which the body is part of the "creative project", an objectified container for effecting appropriate style. (James and Carkeek, 1997, 117)

In summary, one would understand that the masculine crisis at present has not emerged solely as a result of the financial changes of the aggressive capital, nor solely because of the changing positions and identities of women. It is also the result of the convergences of several long processes.

The emergence of new types of men have de-stabilized traditional masculinities in a way that this de-stabilization and re-branding can be evaluated by many as a "crisis". The integrity of masculinity seems to have always been, implicitly or explicitly, at stake, always depending on the social and economic conditions of its time. Traditional masculinities appear to have been under constant threat, for loss of stability, even before the emergence of the "looming" new era with alternative masculinities. Yet, the model of traditional heteronormativity still survives, allowing for renegotiations and sly permutations, otherwise we would not be discussing its constant "destabilisation" and challenges. The struggle for masculine self-definition powers on global society, thought and, of course, fiction.

The following chapters attempt to display how the crisis in men's identity is represented within the fictional characters but also contribute to the understanding of masculinities at present, opening up to further discourse on the possibilities of negotiation within the crisis, so that different types of masculinities can exist, with hopefully fewer complications emerging as a result of hegemony and impositions.

Globality in Crisis – Masculinity in Crisis

When discussing the forms of masculinities today one should take into account the different crises and idealizations, but also the grip the present time has on men's lives and the shaping of their identities. Several studies have explored the impact on, and expectations created for, gendered identities by the shift in economy and the labor market in today's neoliberalism (Jeffrey 2010; Broughton and Walton 2006). In support of this, and according to Lindisfarne and Neale, neoliberalism, whose driving force is financial, has wrought great changes in masculinities and the global social order (Lindisfarne and Neale, 2016, 30). The extent of this impact can be better understood if one considers the fact that identities today—the same as many other aspects of the present civilization—are inevitably discussed within a globalized society. The term "global society" is generally agreed upon as referring to a society of "increased economic interdependence" (Trevillion, qtd. in Pease and Pringle, 2001, 9). Yet, globalization in the bigger picture is very difficult to define, as it is challenging to specify its onset, its expanse over the present time and its entity as a historical process. As one of the foremost theoreticians in the field, Manfred B. Steger suggests that the term "globality" comes to "signify a social condition characterized by tight global economic, political, cultural, and environmental interconnections and flows that make most of

the currently existing borders and boundaries irrelevant" (Steger, 2013, 9). Globality flows have set to motion a gigantic process of transformation, affecting unevenly different parts of the world and unsettling prior fixed notions of customs, identities and ideas.

Because of the technological advances that use digitized words, ideas, images and sounds, culture now appears to be flowing faster than ever: "Of course not all cultures flow equally easily and at the same rate. That is or one thing, cultures of the world's most powerful financially or technologically progressed societies flow around the world much more readily than those of relatively weak and marginal ones" (Ritzer, 2011, 154). Consequently, according to theorists of the so-called "cultural convergence" like George Ritzer, "cultures are subject to many of the same global flows and tend to grow more alike" (Ibid.,154), and seem to move increasingly towards assimilation in the direction of dominant groups and societies (Ibid., 163). John Meyer argues that a series of global models in a variety of different domains has emerged (politics, business, education), the spread of which has led to a surprising amount of uniformity throughout the world. Such global models have become "more codified and publicized than at any other time in history" (qtd. in Ritzer, 2011, 165). In this content, culture is now observed via the lens of "rationalized structures that shape (and are shaped by) the macro– (state systems), meso– (organizations and associations) and micro– (individual citizenship and identity) levels throughout the world" (Ibid., 166). Whether globalization is seen via a pessimistic lens as a westernization or "MacDonaldization" of the world (a term coined by Ritzer in his 1983 article "The MacDonaldization of Society")—eroding every trace of national particularity of culture—or is, otherwise, welcomed as an opening of the entire world to the progressive ideas of each culture, it still remains a dynamic process of change, even as it drives towards uniformity and homogenization.

This totality of "global convergence" (Tomlinson, 2004, 371–72), however, is not trouble-or challenge-free; a large number of theorists and analysts have questioned its existence. According to Steger, the years after September 11th "gave an unexpected jolt to the struggle over the meaning and the direction of globalization" (Steger, 2013, 131): the global financial crisis that followed—with world unemployment, poor economic development, inefficient national incomes for many countries in the west, border pressures, the spread of pandemics as well as terrorism, religious conflicts and serious challenges to the environment because of the climate change—came to manifest that this new global crisis was far from solely economic,