

Male Bodies and Sexual Difference

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*A Proposal for a Feminist
Corporeo-ethics*

By

Ovidiu Anemtoaicei

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I dedicate this book to Carmen, who, with her choice, offered me life and guided me in ways so that I could live differently. I see this book as an effort to account somehow for our life together, with different paths though, learning to meet again and again and to nurture our relationship much beyond a mother-son bond. Thank you for your generosity!

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INTRODUCTION

I cannot explain exactly why I have emerged in this way, and my efforts at narrative reconstruction are always undergoing revision. There is that in me and of me for which I can give no account. But does this mean that I am not, in the moral sense, accountable for who I am and for what I do? If I find that, despite my best efforts, *a certain opacity* persists and I cannot make myself fully accountable to you, is this ethical failure? Or is it a failure that gives rise to another ethical disposition in the place of a full and satisfying notion of narrative accountability? Is there in this affirmation of partial transparency a possibility for acknowledging a relationality that binds me more deeply to language and to you than I previously knew? And is the relationality that conditions and blinds this “self” not, precisely, an indispensable resource for ethics?

—Judith Butler - *Giving an Account of Oneself* (2005, p. 40; italics mine)

This book is motivated, among other things, by an ethical inquiry: how to account for oneself in such ways so that this very “questioning” can turn into an affirmative doing, while writing as a (male) body, being in language and various life situations? How could I *think* and *do* differently so as to imagine and live social changes in this “present,” while being faithful in feminist terms to my embodied self?

In the context of discussing Theodor Adorno’s conception of ethical violence and the importance of his formulation for the current debates about moral nihilism, in *Giving an Account of Oneself* (2005), Judith Butler suggests that there are necessary theoretical changes to be done, given the “shifting historical character of moral inquiry itself” and that the questions shaping the moral inquiry are produced by the historical conditions one is part of (Butler, 2005, p. 6). The acknowledgement of the historical situatedness of the moral questioning becomes in itself a crucial element of a larger interrogation of subjective development in “our” times and, in this very sense, Butler is trying to show that “a theory of subject formation that acknowledges the limits of self-knowledge can serve a

conception of ethics and, indeed, responsibility” (Butler, 2005, p. 20). In the process of my own narrative of living a personal political investment in being a male body in a world woven in power relations against various groups of different “women” and “men” and so many “others,” I am confronted with an apparent constraining opacity regarding the possibilities of accounting for my ethical questioning, given my more than less personal privileged positioning. For this reason, a theoretical account of this very conditioning concomitantly with that of my hopefully possible affirmative thinking/doing has to accompany the ethical questioning, which unfolds both in and as the writing process itself, an uncomfortable process that also has the potential to express me as a sexuate subject.¹

My ethical inquiry leads me on the pathways opened up by several theoretical perspectives, which, in this process, function not as points of origin but rather as milieus that welcome at their crossroads certain possibilities for male bodies in relation to language and the world. In this light, the aim of this project is to schematize another way of thinking the categories of “men” and “masculinities” and to explore the implications of this re-conceptualization within an explicit feminist philosophical stance, as to critically engage with the ways male bodies are both lived and theorized in relation to masculinities. Therefore, my book proposes a reading and a rethinking of the relationship between male bodies and masculinities by developing a conceptual framework that can account for the ethical dimensions of men’s and women’s lives, drawing on the importance of male bodies and their lived experiences and material-symbolic practices within the masculine subjective constitution and on their potential subversive agency against the patriarchal ordering of the relationships between women and men. I argue that a *re-imagining* of the male embodied lived experiences in sexually differentiated terms, that is, in relation to one’s own bodily specificity, on the one hand, and others’ bodies, on the other hand, can effect a reconfiguring of the masculine subject formation in non-violent terms towards other men and women’s bodies and lives, according to the lines drawn in the philosophy of sexual difference developed by Luce Irigaray.

At the same time, a reworking of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari’s notion of “becoming-man” through the philosophy of sexual difference is meant to support my thinking of what it might mean to be faithful to one’s embodied sexuate nature in the processes of cultural becomings and articulations as a masculine subjectivity in relation to one’s male corporeality,

¹ I use the term “sexuate” with a specific meaning in the context of Luce Irigaray’s work, which I will clarify later in the book.

and to other women's and men's bodies different than "mine". A main thread of my work is, therefore, given by the question of the *nature of the materiality of male bodies*, its relation to the world and its agential status for productive social transformations. I follow this question in my explorations of the *ontology of sexual difference* as I read it in Luce Irigaray's works, of the *experiential and relational ontology* of a feminist phenomenology of sexual difference I hope to contribute along the lines of Luce Irigaray's work, and of the projects Gilles Deleuze and Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari together articulated in relation to bodies, thought and language.

In the course of this book, I engage preponderantly with Luce Irigaray's philosophy of sexual difference, which I see as a viable and promising view for answering problems I identify in the first chapter, in relation to a specific conceptualization of male bodies and masculinities. Her perspective formulates a fruitful connection between the embodied individual experiences of the world and the larger social and symbolic power structures, with an emphasis on the agential role of the sexuate bodies. At the same time, I appeal to the works of Gilles Deleuze and those of Deleuze and Guattari, as they share a similar critique of philosophical thought and of its inherent masculinism, while offering viable alternatives for imagining different ways of escaping the grips of patriarchal thinking.

In a narratological reading, I offer both a story and a plot in my book. While the story is the one concerning the production of the masculine embodied subjectivity, albeit a different one, the plot presents the story in three stages, all revolving around a specific understanding of the notion of "critique," which I borrow from the philosophical work of Gilles Deleuze. First, I have in view this conception of critique while analysing the predominant perspective on the relationship between male bodies and masculinities within the Critical Studies of Men and Masculinities. In the second chapter, I demonstrate that Irigaray, too, shares Deleuze's understanding of critique in her engagement with the Western canonical philosophical thought. Finally, I use this critique in relation to Deleuze and Guattari's already famous view on "becoming-woman" and gender power relations, with the aim of arguing for the possibility of imagining a "becoming-man" along the lines of sexual difference philosophy.

The *first chapter* takes a preliminary step. While looking for a theoretical account to engage with when thinking about men and their bodies and the possibilities for new political pro-feminist agendas, I develop the argument that, in the recently institutionalized area of Critical Studies on Men and Masculinities, male bodies are theorized

predominantly within a social constructivist and/or radically discursive constructionist viewpoint. I identify a certain conceptual “gap” between male bodies and masculinities that is left unscrutinized. I show that the current dominating theoretical frameworks used in understanding “men” and “masculinities” and their relationship to “male bodies” cannot account for this gap and for the question of the transformative ethical potential. Secondly, I raise the question of the almost total absence of a theoretical engagement with sexual difference perspective in the scholarly works falling under the studies on men and masculinities, despite the nominal acknowledgement of the importance of male bodies’ presence in these works (and also as referents in the academic field itself) and despite the explicit focus on male bodies discernible in sexual difference theories. The chapter prepares the ground for answering the question of my book: what it means to think about male bodies, men and masculinities and the implications of such thinking through the philosophy of sexual difference?

In the *second chapter*, I discuss Luce Irigaray’s understanding of sexual difference in both her earlier and later works by focusing mainly on her critique of the psychoanalytical notions of (male) Imaginary and Symbolic and their relationship to male bodies, in order to thematize masculinities and male bodies in different ways. Basically, I aim at developing a conceptual scheme through which to look at male bodies as male embodiments with special attention to various morphological and bodily locations as possible imaginary and symbolic alternatives to the phallic representations of male bodies.

The *third chapter* is structured around the issue of the relationship between male bodies, on the one hand, and the language and symbolic articulations and their possible critical reimaginings, on the other hand. Another aim of the book, then, given the framework of sexual difference philosophy, is to think the conditions of possibility for a different understanding of the materiality of bodies and language and their constitutive relationship that could allow imagining a restructuring of the masculine subject position in its male bodily expressions and practices. In short, how can I think/imagine another male imaginary and masculine symbolic, i.e. another form for male bodies and masculine subject of ethically relating to female bodies and the feminine subjectivity yet to come? To achieve a change in men’s language, in their position of enunciation, discourses, symbolic, a different consideration of language/discourse production is needed, one that is rather a carnal expression, continuity and connection in the relation with the world, in the meeting with the others and primarily in the encounters with the sexually differentiated others, an expression which can allow for changes. This new conception of language-materiality,

which I recognize in Luce Irigaray's works, will answer to the problems I identify in the first chapter concerning the ways male bodies are theorized in relation to men and masculinities. I also argue that Irigaray's work can be read in phenomenological terms, that is, along the lines of an *experiential ontology of sexual difference* (as an alternative to the readings of her work as either strategic or realist essentialist).

In the *fourth chapter*, I focus on the issue of what it means *to think differently*, to think in the expressions of a different thought as such which both answers to its historical conditioning and can effect new paths, new histories. With their critique of representation dominating the Western philosophical thought and by liberating *difference in itself* and the concept of difference from that of identity, Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy de-centres the (masculine) Subject, while bringing in a plethora of "becomings." Many feminist critiques, which I align with, have been directed toward this concept, one of its particular exemplars being the famous "becoming-woman." Sexual difference, seen as another signifiatory/discursive system among others by Deleuze and Guattari, seems to be neglected, for a greater project, rightfully labelled by feminists as yet another masculinist story. I believe, however, that some conceptual locations in their philosophy can be used and reworked through the philosophy of sexual difference. With this aim in mind, I focus on their critical stance of moving away from the centrality/primacy of language and on their development of a minoritarian understanding of language in terms of "stuttering." I also look at their concept of *correlation* and the critique of *metaphor* as representation, aspects also approached by Luce Irigaray in her critique of the male/masculine language, as starting points for imagining a different masculine "langage" as a tool for destabilizing the masculine subject position. I also argue that, in Deleuze and Guattari's view on "becomings," sexual difference is actually already presupposed, but eventually dismissed, in the very existence of the temporary "becoming-woman" (towards "becoming-imperceptible"). Consequently, I show that their impossible "becoming-man" could be reworked nevertheless as an explicit ontological reaffirmation of sexual difference, with some implicit caveats, given the historical position of the masculine subject. By exploring their understanding of *intensive thinking* and *philosophy as concept creation*, as a way of answering to problems/paradoxes in our worldly encounters, I aim at reworking the concept of "becoming-man" within the philosophy of sexual difference. I see "becoming-man" as a figuration of what it might mean to be faithful to one's embodied sexuante nature in the processes of cultural becomings and articulations of a masculine subjectivity in relation to one's own male corporeality, on the

one hand, and in relation to other women's and men's different bodies, on the other hand.

In the *final section*, I outline some of the ethical implications of this re-understanding of male bodies and of masculine subjectivity in terms of *incommensurability* with female bodies and feminine subjectivity and their relation to language and symbolic transformations. I reiterate several of Irigaray's "ethical gestures" as starting points for "becoming-man." Bearing in mind Irigaray's assertion that "I am sexed implies I am not everything" (Irigaray, 1996, p. 51), I offer a preliminary argument for the need of a masculine culture of stepping back so that women's lives, spaces and cultures could flourish in their own (non-pre) defining terms.

CHAPTER ONE

MASCULINITIES, MALE BODIES AND SEXUAL (IN)DIFFERENCE

The point of critique is not justification but a different way of feeling: another sensibility.

—Gilles Deleuze - *Nietzsche and Philosophy* (2006, p. 94)

In this chapter I develop a line of argumentation concerning the way male bodies are theorized in studies about men and masculinities. Through a brief outline of the development of its main theoretical frameworks and concepts (such as “masculinity,” “hegemonic masculinity,” and “embodiment of masculinity”), I examine the nature of the role of male bodies on which the theorizing of men and masculinities is based in some of the most representative works in the area. I also focus on the relationship between these studies and feminist theory, arguing that the dominant perspective of male bodies in relation to masculinity/masculinities is inherited from the feminist debates on the conceptual relationship between bodies and language/discourses. I argue that, as a result, male bodies are theorized predominantly within a radical discursive constructionist viewpoint, given both the primacy of gender and queer paradigms with a discernible omission of feminist sexual difference perspectives. Furthermore, I raise several concerns in relation to the knowledge production process and the status of the academic subfield under discussion. I conclude the chapter by showing that a certain “gap” within the conceptual relationship between male bodies and masculinities is left unscrutinized. Consequently, I propose a turn toward the sexual difference philosophy of Luce Irigaray, a perspective both presupposed and unacknowledged in the scholarly engagements with men’s bodies in the studies on men and masculinities.

1.1 “Masculinities without men” and male bodies in theory¹

The “body,” both as a referent and an analytical category in its acknowledged specificity (marked according to various axes of differentiation), is one of the key sites of various feminist theoretical and political struggles. Conceptualized either as an impediment or “site” of oppression, or as a source for the revaluation of “women” and “the feminine,” “bodies” used to be theorized, in both deconstructive and constructive manner, based on the claim that the patriarchal gender orders draw on dualistic devices, such as the mind/body and the masculine/feminine hierarchical binary oppositions (Lloyd, 1984; Jaggar and Bordo, 1989). Feminist theories considered these divides as being in a way connected, meaning that within patriarchal order(s) masculinity/men and mind have been associated and hierarchically valued as compared to femininity/women and the body.² As a result, in the case of men, one of the theoretical and practical strategies deployed to disrupt this binary oppositional logic was to “reconnect” masculinities with men’s bodies (in order also to “get back in touch with their feelings”) and look at how new ways of understanding male bodies could offer exit points from the grip of constrained meanings of “men” and “masculinity/masculinities” and its violent enactments toward women’s bodies. In this sense, during the last decades, a new academic subfield, that of *men and masculinities*, shaped predominantly by (male) profeminist scholars (coming mostly from the UK, North American, Australian and Scandinavian academic contexts), has developed a significant corpus of scholarship on masculinities and male bodies contributing, alongside feminist efforts, to a different understanding of men’s positions in the constant re-structuring of multiple networks of power relations.³

¹ “Masculinities without men” is Judith Halberstam’s title of the introduction to *Female Masculinity* (1998).

² This historical structural association became known as the “weak thesis” of the disembodiment of Western thought. In contrast, according to the “strong thesis”, both “the feminine” and “the body” were negated in the constitution of thought as such (Colebrook, 2000b, p. 28). I will discuss Colebrook’s exploration of these two theses at length in the second chapter.

³ Starting with the work of Kimmel (1994), Connell (1995), Goldstein (1994) and Bordo (1999), there has been a large scholarly interest in male bodies. The literature relates predominantly to the following themes: media (Craig, 1992; Goldstein, 1994), sport (Dworkin & Messner, 1999), disability (Gerschick 2000) violence (Hearn, 1998; Messerschmidt, 2000), health and illness (Sabo and

As the subfield of men and masculinities became the “hot politics” in academia (Ashe, 2007), the position of the “male bodies” in relation to feminist goals raised an inevitable question. Given the centrality of women’s bodies in both feminist thought and activism, one would expect a similar move in exploring the male body when critically theorizing men and masculinities. Implicitly, writing about men’s bodies should be seen as political as writing about women’s bodies is for the feminist scholarship. Roussel and Downs (2007, p. 184) claim that, given that the issues concerning the body and emotions were relegated by rationalism to an inferior status in men’s public and personal existence, then the subjective position of a male theorist leads to a corresponding strategy of taking as an “object” that very sphere of experience that remains unconsidered, namely the “natural” body and its related feelings and emotions. Calvin Thomas (2002, p. 62) also pointed out the relationship between “male bodies” and “writing” and its inherent political stakes:

My argument—which isn’t necessarily “the best” but simply the one I find most compelling—has been, and will continue here to be, that one possibly productive way to analyze male power and hegemony, and to reconfigure male identification and desire, involves a specific sort of attention to the “matter” of the male body and to the materialization of that body in writing- in writing as what Cixous calls “the passageway, the entrance, the exit, the dwelling place of the other in me”. (“Sorties,” 583)

Therefore, a conceptual delineation between men as objects of knowledge production and men as subjects of doing research might not be so clear-cut when it comes to theorizing male bodies and the implicit political investment in relation to feminist aims.⁴ The issue of “men in feminism”/“men doing pro-feminism” and its challenges is not a recent one and it has been already addressed by many of the scholars focusing on the issues of men and masculinities.⁵ For that reason, the acknowledgement

Gordon, 1995; Watson 2000), globalization (Connell 1998; Connell, 2005), age (Drummond, 2003; Drummond, 2005) and sexuality (Connell, 1990). For more information on other scholars, sources and latest developments in the field see also Kimmel, Hearn and Connell (2005), Flood, Gardiner, Pease and Pringle (2007) and Jodi O’Brien (2009).

⁴ I thank Professor Jeff Hearn for raising a discussion on this distinction in our personal e-mail exchanges.

⁵ Among them, notable names are: Jardine and Smith (1987), Kimmel (1987, 1998), Kimmel and Mosmiller (1992), Digby (1998), Brod (2002), Messner (2000), Gardiner (2002), Murphy (2004), Flood (2004), Ashe (2007) and Tarrant (2008, 2009). For a detailed analysis of the ways in which the concept of men’s

of the issue of the experiential exclusivity in feminism and the rejection of the re-instantiation of any type of “introspective politics of ‘me tooism’” (Ashe, 2007, p. 54) also became central to the discussion.⁶

Moreover, the issue of men in feminism was paralleled in feminist theory by the problem of the relationship between the notions of masculinity and men, that is, in the terms of gender and sex. In outlining the theoretical engagements with men and masculinity as an object of study in feminist theory, Robyn Wiegman demonstrates that feminism’s critical interrogation of gender and the disassembling of the normative cultural discourse that binds masculinity to men rendered masculinity “as pertinent to if not constitutive of female subjectivity” (2002, p. 33). Wiegman argues that the theoretical distinctions between sex, gender and sexuality developed by Judith Butler (1990) and Judith Halberstam (1998) have had an important impact on masculinities studies. Queer theory’s poststructuralist critique of identity’s coherence and gender theory’s critique of sex/gender relation (seeing sex as gender’s effect) made possible the research on “masculinity without men” and “transformed the content, scope, and political project of masculinity as a domain of critical inquiry” (Wiegman, 2002, p. 51). For Wiegman, then, an aim is not to develop alternative masculinities for men but rather a larger interrogation of masculinity as a production of gender distinct from male bodies. This objective is still pursued even today in the studies of men and masculinities. For example, in the “Introduction to the special issue - Masculinities in Women’s Studies: Locations and Dislocations” (2011), the editors John C. Landreau and Michael J. Murphy explain that their goal is to change the “angle of approach” and not focus on men in Women’s Studies or on men doing feminism, but rather to challenge the conceptual relationship between men and masculinities so as to conceive of masculinity “as a range of social practices and relationships— theoretically independent of male embodiment.” In short:

[T]he essays that follow are both the continuation of a longstanding, important conversation about men and masculinity, and about men in Women’s Studies, but also the beginning of a new conversation that

identities is formulated within profeminist politics and the effects of deconstructions and reconstructions of identity within profeminism, as well as the major theoretical perspectives in the field, Fidelma Ashe’s *The new politics of masculinity: men, power, and resistance* (2007) is an important contribution.

⁶ See, for example, Michael Flood’s discussion of various important challenges posed by men’s presence as students in feminist classrooms in his article “Men as Students and Teachers of Feminist Scholarship” (2011).

dislocates masculinity as the property of men in order to make it available to a variety of embodied practices not all of which are easily comprehensible by a binary gender system. (Landreau and Murphy, 2011, p. 133)

Thus, it is not the male body's presence in feminist spaces as an issue in itself, but rather how these bodies enact or not certain expressions of being a "man" or "masculine," or how these structures, configurations and practices, i.e. "being a man" or "being masculine," are embodied or not. These processes seem more relevant to the authors than the nature of the elements building the relationship (i.e., between male body and masculinity). This standpoint is implicitly also based on a specific conceptualizing of male bodies in relation to language, sex, gender and sexuality, which I will address later in this chapter. However, it suffices to say here that by cutting off masculinity from male bodies in terms of property, even if just theoretically, male bodies might become somewhat redundant in the question of the meaning of masculinity. The conundrum of men's presence in feminism might be paradoxical, if discussing men still implies talking about male bodies, as seems to be the case in the quotation above when referring to men. In short, a concern is that the focus on "masculinity" (no matter how strongly "disconnected" might be conceptually from male bodies) still has to answer to the question of male bodies and their materiality when it comes to men. The urgency of the question is not accidental then, given that, after decades, there is nevertheless an ongoing discussion on the issue of men in feminism, in women's studies/gender studies or in women's organizations. As a consequence, the question of the materiality of male bodies in relation to men is an important one. How are we to understand the relationship between male bodies and masculinities in the case of men?

I will address this question by focusing primarily on the work of scholars associated with the studies on men and masculinities, while excluding those commonly considered by pro-feminist groups as being anti-feminist. My analysis involves a critical reading of specific texts that are representative for the subfield and addresses openly the issue of male bodies as far as the theoretical assumptions about bodies, sex, gender, sexuality and language are concerned. The conceptualization of men's bodies is, of course, inextricably linked to the larger theoretical discussions on men and masculinities developed over decades by pro-feminist, feminist and queer theorists, as well.⁷ Focusing on how male

⁷ The distinction between pro-feminism and feminism refers mostly to the issue of the experiential nature of the feminist voices, meaning that pro-feminism is often

bodies are theorized in these works as compared to the feminist theorization of bodies, materiality of the body and embodiment will provide insight into the key theoretical apparatuses employed in the field of studies on men and masculinities in general, given the essential role male bodies seem to play even for the status of this academic subfield. Therefore, the target of critical scrutiny is both a *specific* understanding of male bodies, which I identify in many of the works produced within this academic area, and, on the basis of that, the subfield itself to a certain extent, as it constructs and presents itself.

The theorizing of masculinities and male bodies and of their material-discursive interplay, part of a larger structuring of new models for political practices by men, was marked by the development of this academic subfield and of its main theoretical apparatuses in relation to both feminism and feminist theories and in distinction to anti-feminist groups that were generally “oriented towards stalling and overturning the effects of feminism on contemporary cultures” (Ashe, 2007, p. 3).

In *Cultures of Masculinity* (2006), Tim Edwards offers a synopsis of what he calls the three “waves” of the studies of men and masculinities. Starting with the 1970’s, sex-role theory and, by the mid-80’s, also the Jungian brand of psychology and object-relation theory dominated the scholarship in the area focusing mostly on the personal and psychological changes of men without, however, any reference to larger institutional structures or economic and political gender inequalities (Pease, 2007, p. 555).⁸ Hearn and Kimmel (2006, p. 131) also argue that with “the influence of women’s liberation, gay liberation, and even men’s liberation, the male sex role was subject to sharp criticism—as ethnocentric, lacking in a power perspective, and positivistic (Eichler, 1980; Kimmel, 1987; Brittan, 1989)”. While during the second wave, Marxist and materialist approaches replaced previous frameworks by emphasizing the concepts of

used in relation to those men who are supporting feminism or gender equality goals while acknowledging the particular and incommensurable experience of oppression and inequality as lived by women, who are thus reserving the concept of feminism for themselves.

⁸ Hearn and Kimmel (2006) argue that various social constructionist perspectives highlighting complexities of men’s social power have emerged in the 80’s, developing critiques of both gender relations and of the dominance of heterosexuality, heterosexism and homophobia. According to them, the contemporary examinations of the construction of masculinities are informed by two themes addressed in these discussions: the power of men over women (heterosocial power relations), and the power of some men over other men (homosocial power relations).

power and hegemony, the third wave was “clearly influenced by the advent of poststructural theory, particularly as it relates to gender in terms of questions of normativity, performativity, and sexuality” (Edwards, 2006, p. 3). In relation to the third wave, Edwards argues that what is considered as common to both the culturalist, literary or media analyses and the more empirically oriented studies on men and masculinities, is the primacy of the social and cultural construction of masculinity.

Meant to express “the immense degree of indebtedness that studies of masculinities owe to feminist theory” (Edwards, 2006, p. 2), the three-phase model proposed by Edwards was seen as presupposing some kind of symmetry between the fields (feminism’s three waves), that seemed intended in the very notion of “men’s studies” as counterpart to “women’s studies”.⁹ Consequently, profeminist male scholars recommended the label of “Critical Studies of Men and Masculinities” or “Critical Studies on Men” (Hearn, 2004) in order to clarify its status as either a derivative field of women’s studies or gender studies, or a separate field but which critically engages with men and masculinities and rejects any anti-feminist positions, that often, intentionally or not, characterized the early and middle stages of men’s studies (Hearn and Pringle, 2006).¹⁰ This was

⁹ Chris Beasley (2009) talks about a so-called *Gender/Sexuality* field, where the concepts of gender and sexuality are employed in its three major subfields: Feminist, Masculinity (sexed categories), and Sexuality Studies (sexual categories). Using a notion of continuum within the Gender/Sexuality field, ranging from Modernist to Postmodern thinking, first discussed in an earlier book *Gender and Sexuality* (2005), Beasley argues that the three subfields draw upon similar theoretical directions such as: Modernist Humanism, (Singular) Difference – i.e. gender or sexuality as the single focus, (Multiple) Difference – typically gender and race, sexuality and race; Social constructionism and Postmodernism. As compared to feminist and sexuality studies that also embraced poststructuralist agendas, masculinity studies would share largely a Modernist alignment, which is dominated by social constructionism (2009, p. 176). Though Beasley admits that Feminist and Masculinity analyses intersect but are not parallel equivalents (2009, p. 179), and given the comparison’s reduction to one of theoretical trends, there still remains a presupposition of a symmetry among the subfields that is not explicitly questioned.

¹⁰ In his article, “From Hegemonic Masculinity to the Hegemony of Men” (2004), Jeff Hearn makes a clear-cut distinction between “Men’s Studies” (many times with antifeminist implications) and “Critical Studies on Men” (mostly with analyses on men from feminist, queer and postcolonial critical perspectives; and where the notion of power is central to the “criticalness” of the field). For Hearn, the reference to “critical „concerns the issue of power and gendered power, that is men’s power. In an earlier article “Theorizing Men and Men’s Theorizing: Men’s Discursive Practices in Theorizing Men” (1998b, p. 801), Hearn indicates other

indeed necessary, since a number of conservative men's groups with anti-feminist implication had emerged from the men's movement in the US and UK contexts, such as the men's liberation, men's rights and father's rights, the spiritual and the Christian groups (Flood, 2007, p. 420). The same was the case of the mythopoetic movement from the 80's and 90's with its ideological and therapeutic basis in the Jungian theory of archetypes and with its leaders such as Robert Bly, James Hillman and Michael Meade (Schwalbe, 2007, pp. 450-453). However, beginning in the 1960's, other men's groups aligned themselves to feminist movements and supported women's fight for gender justice (Kimmel and Mosmiller, 1992; Messner, 1997), an affiliation which nevertheless raised questions and generated reservations on both sides related to issues such the use of profeminism to obtain research funding or the side-lining of women's perspectives, or that feminism might be overly critical of men and masculinity or it might suppress the emergence of distinctive profeminist perspectives (Ashe, 2007). These profeminist groups focused in their writings on the relationship between men's identities and gender power (Seidler, 1992; Stoltenberg, 2000), turning also their attention towards a more nuanced critique of men's identities in terms of masculine subjectivities as central to the domination and subordination of women, gay, working class and black men (Hearn and Collision, 1994; Connell, 1995; Messner, 1997; Kimmel, 1998). In parallel, profeminist men created national organizations, groups and circles facilitating different political agendas and practices for reducing male violence against women and for men's consciousness raising purposes (Goldrik-Jones, 2002; Hearn and Pringle, 2006). Academically, these groups promoted and developed studies on men, later called "critical studies on men and masculinities," supported by various publications and journals and by writers, such as Connell, Hearn, Kaufman, Kimmel, Seidler and Stoltenberg (Ashe, 2007, p. 19).¹¹ The

aspects that speak of "criticalness" within CSM: "a critical relation to topic, encompassing a self-reflexivity of the author, an awareness of the social location of both the author and the topic, and the consideration of the social bases of knowledge; a commitment to the political emancipation of both women and men; and where appropriate, empirical scrutiny not just assertion and speculation".

¹¹ Various journals in the field appeared in the last decade: *The Journal of Men's Studies*, *Men and Masculinities*, *Psychology of Men and Masculinity*, *Nordic Journal for Masculinity Studies*. Other journals are more focused: *Fathering: A Journal of Theory and Research about Men as Parents*, *International Journal of Men's Health*, *Journal of Men, Masculinities and Spirituality*, *Journal of African American Males in Education*, *Journal of Men's Health and Gender*, *Thymos: Journal of Boyhood Studies, Culture, Society and Masculinities*, *Journal of Black Masculinity*.

scholarly interest in men and masculinities expanded in various areas of research such as health, sports, military, globalization, capitalism, media, education, etc., but also geographically to Mexico, Brazil, Australia, Japan and Africa (Hearn and Kimmel, 2006, pp. 136-137).

As far as the connection with feminist theory is concerned, Whitehead, Talahite and Moodley (2013) argue that while feminist theory produced important advances in the dialogues with post-colonial theory, queer theory and intersectionality, Critical Studies on Men and Masculinities (CSMM) remained however predominantly second wave feminist in origin and association. As compared to this, Whitehead, Talahite and Moodley argue that a Sociology of Men and Masculinity (SMM) came to be positioned within the third wave feminism, drawing on theorists such as Foucault, Deleuze, Butler and using their models, ideas, and concepts to explore men and masculinities in a particular context, e.g. crime, violence, management, organizations, nationhood, race, sexuality.¹² Although heavily influenced by second wave social constructionist theories, the writers located in the discipline of SMM are more poststructuralists in origin and perspective. The distinction between CSMM and SMM seems to be an effect of the theoretical expansion over the last decades of concepts such as gender, sexuality, masculinity, identity, subjectivity and power, and of the divisions their specific conceptualization generated among the scholars.

Whitehead (2002) argues that two opposing sociological traditions explored the concepts of power and resistance with regard to men and masculinities. The juridical-discursive model, whereby power is hierarchical and oppressive, is to be found mostly in the constructionist and critical structuralist perspectives in both the feminist and pro-feminist first-wave and in the second-wave, informing concepts such as patriarchy,

¹² According to Whitehead, Talahite and Moodley the writers that locate within the genre of the Sociology of Men and Masculinity are Stephen M. Whitehead, Deborah Kerfoot, David Knights, David Collinson, Travis Kong, Louise Archer, Bob Lingard, Bob Pease, Tony Jefferson, David Gutterman, Rachel Jewkes, bell hooks, Gary Dowsett, David Tacey, Lahoucine Ouzgane, Bryant Alexander, Hazel Carby, Peter Middleton, Kaja Silverman, Richard Collier, Victor Seidler, Lynne Segal, Susan Speer. I thank Stephen M. Whitehead for raising the distinction between Critical Studies on Men and Masculinities and the Sociology of Men and Masculinities in our personal e-mail exchanges. However, this delineation is not so evident, as various theorists are to be found on both sides. Furthermore, the names of the “camps” do not translate into a difference in the background fields, meaning that sociology is not the area only of those located in the Sociology of Men and Masculinities. Actually, the majority of the writers have their theoretical resources in sociology, cultural studies and humanities approaches.

gender order and hegemonic masculinity, which are missing however a coherent account of a “subject.” A second model, based on Foucaultian understanding of disciplinary power, found mostly in third-wave feminism, conceptualizes power as circulatory and “immanent to both the social condition and the production of individual subjectivity” (Whitehead, 2002, p. 111). For Whitehead, the second model is much more productive as it can be applied to men in order to see them in terms of a masculine subject which is both “subject to discursive power regimes and as, simultaneously, a contributor to and active player in the social enaction of gender, and, thus, in instances of domination” (2002, p. 110).

Men’s bodies came into explicit focus in the studies of masculinities when feminist theories, particularly those informed by poststructuralism, questioned the mechanisms of the naturalization of women’s bodies with the important theoretical outcome of seeing the body as discursive and gender as the very apparatus of production whereby sex is established (Kathy Davis, 1997; Roussel and Downs, 2007). This was related, of course, to the larger development of feminist theory and its own struggles with the concepts of “sex,” “gender,” “discourse,” and “representation.” In her article, “From Radical Representations to Corporeal Becomings: The Feminist Philosophy of Lloyd, Grosz, and Gatens,” Claire Colebrook (2000a, p. 76) captures the presuppositions in the conceptualization of the body identifiable within the feminist waves:

While first wave feminism demanded equality, and second wave feminism demanded difference, the body emerged in the third wave as a means of deconstructing this sameness/difference opposition. The appeal to equality assumes that gender differences are imposed on otherwise equal beings, and thereby precludes the possibility the different types of bodies might demand different forms of political recognition. In the second wave assertion of difference and specificity the body is still seen as that which precedes social construction. But for feminists of the second wave, different bodies demand different forms of articulation. In the third wave, both these arguments are attacked for having an unproblematic appeal to the pre-representational body. Women are neither the same nor essentially different; to decide such an argument one would have to appeal to a body from which social representation derives or upon which representation is imposed. But if we were to argue that the very notion of pre-representational body is effected through representation, we would have to move beyond discussions of women’s essential sameness or difference. Broadly speaking, the first mode of this critique is linguistic in approach, and demonstrates that any appeal to a body is always already discursive. The “body”, therefore, is an intensely political site, not a pre-representational ground, but an effect of representation that passes itself off as grounding.

Colebrook identifies two types of answers to the way sex/gender distinction looks at the body from the materiality/representation divide. According to her, the first is located in the work of Judith Butler (1990, 1993, 1997) where “matter is only thinkable *as matter*, and hence as already discursive, effected as discourse’s other” (2000a, p. 78; italics in original). The second possible way to go beyond the sameness/difference debate was to recognize that “while the body may only be *referred to* through discourse and representation, it possesses a force and being that marks the very character of representation” (2000a, p. 77; italics in original). This second position is to be found mostly in the ontological projects developed by Elizabeth Grosz, Moira Gatens and Genevieve Lloyd.¹³ Colebrook argues that, as compared to the three Australian philosophers who are guided in their journeys by the question of “what are the specific ways in which the real becomes meaningful?” (2000a, p. 89), in Butler’s work, relying on a Hegelian logic of constitutive power of positing and seeing discourse as a system of signification (conflated with a broad sense of language), “the body is not an effect of discourse but its status as non-discursive is an effect of positing” (2000a, p. 79).¹⁴ Given that Butler’s account also seems to conflate the ontological and epistemic dimensions in relation to the body, by equating “the *being* of a thing with the mode in which that thing is known” (2000a, p. 78), the body is always already signified, given as referent and, therefore, “not a privileged lever for the disruption of representational closure, for representation’s own logic (as re-presentation) demands that any ‘presence’ is never given immediately but only *as present*” (2000a, p. 80; italics in original). In other words, the positing of the materiality of body as “outside” of language (pre-existing or on a distinct ontological plane than that of language), is done always already through language, and subsumed, therefore, to a discursive constitution of the real. The materiality of the body is conceptualized through the material forms of signification (linguistic marks of differentiation) that are seen as material after the constitution of such materiality. Accordingly, “sex” is posited after the attribution of gender, that is, the so-called pre-discursive ground of “sex” is an effect of the discursive representation of gender (Colebrook, 2002a, p. 82).

¹³ I will refer more to this position later at the end of this chapter, when discussing Moira Gatens’ critique of sex/gender distinction (1996).

¹⁴ The “constitutive power of positing” is captured in Butler’s one of the most famous quotations: “To posit a materiality outside of language is still to posit that materiality, and that materiality so posited will retain that positing as its constitutive condition” (1993, pp. 67-68).

As I will elaborate more in this chapter, it is precisely this latter conception of the body that ultimately earned its supremacy in current scholarly engagements with male bodies in the studies on men and masculinities. Given the predominance of the *gender* paradigm (and more recently also *queer*) in studies of men and masculinities, while drawing predominantly, though also critically, on Butler's notion of "performativity" and Connell's concept of "hegemonic masculinity/masculinities" (1983, 1987, 1995, 2005), the radical constructionist perspective of masculine subjectivities contagiously became the prevalent way of theorizing male bodies. At the same time, the use of this perspective was accompanied by the disregarding of the sexual difference paradigm, almost reproducing the same type of marginalization of the latter theory that is discernible even within feminist academia (Braidotti, 1997). The lack of questioning the primacy of discursive constructionism in analyzing the links between male bodies, men and masculinities is therefore quite challenging, given that the social constructivism of the body, in general, has suffered various critiques for its supposed relativism, skepticism, linguistic reductionism, and the abolition of discovery or surprise (Weinberg, 2012, p. 151).¹⁵ Moreover, some (male) scholars involved in research on male bodies and masculinities assimilated a poststructuralist understanding of gender while overlooking feminist debates around the materiality of the body as source of power, a question that, obviously, revolves around the relationship between language/discourse and materiality/body.¹⁶ Understandable as the reluctance towards essentialism or towards a return to a so-called pre-discursive materiality of the body may be (a problem that dominated much feminist literature in the mid 80's and through the 90's), it might be the case that

¹⁵ In his section "Social Constructivism and the Body" (2012, pp. 151-153) from the *Routledge Handbook of Body Studies*, Darin Weinberg refutes each of these accusations against the social constructivism of the body.

¹⁶ The research on how bodily experiences have an effect on the subjective dimension revealed that the discussion is not safe from whether there can be pre-discursive experiences or diverse discursive forces which always already shape experiences. Joan W. Scott's analysis from "The Evidence of Experience" (1991, pp. 773-797) and "Experience" (1992, pp. 22-40) and Linda Alcoff's account in "Merleau-Ponty and Feminist Theory on Experience" (2000a, pp. 251-271) and, again, in "Phenomenology, Post-structuralism, and Feminist Theory on the concept of Experience" (2000b, pp. 39-56) is an illustration of such a debate. Silvia Stoller also engages with this debate in relation to the connections between poststructuralism and phenomenology in her "Phenomenology and the Poststructural Critique of Experience" (2009, pp. 707-737). I will return to this debate later in this chapter in the context of my discussion about "the embodiment of masculinity".

the mind (discourse, culture)/body (materiality, nature) dichotomy remains quite secured by the very positing of male bodies as the location of power forces and as subjected to different systems of signification, with the consequent minimizing of their agential role in masculine subject formations.¹⁷ Accordingly, the adoption of the view according to which there is nothing determining/agential in male materiality in relation to the shaping of masculinity and its historical variability is probably meant to leave open the possibility of political change in the development of masculine subjectivity (that is, of men) at the expense of conceiving of men's bodies as malleable, flexible, somehow passive, under the discursive forces of socio-historical contingencies. To put it in Butler's terms, the explicit turn to male bodies proved to be again a return to the male "sign" and "signifiers," that is, the referent purported to be evoked by the concept of "body." The "what is" remains, as I will show in the course of this chapter, somewhat deferred and even void of content, precisely on the basis of its lack of differentiation.

In this light, despite the remarkable shift whereby "men's bodies *as bodies* have gone from near invisibility to hypervisibility" in terms of representations of male bodies (Gill, Henwood and McLean, 2005, p. 39; italics in original), there are still only a few studies concerned with male embodiment and almost no explicit and systematic reflections on how both men's perceptions of their bodies and diverse bodily lived experiences partake in the formation of their masculine subjectivity and individual lives.¹⁸ The explicit Foucaultian anti-phenomenological framework, which seems to obscure a sexual difference feminist perspective, recalls once more the so-called "transatlantic disconnection" (Braidotti, 2002) between the gender and sexual difference paradigms. Male bodies remain apparently

¹⁷ For more about the debate on essentialism in feminist theory see, for example, the work of Diana Fuss (1989), Elizabeth Grosz (1989), Naomi Schor (1989), Moira Gatens (1991), Margaret Whitford (1991), Tina Chanter (1995) and Alison Stone (2006).

¹⁸ I am not talking here about male embodiments as possible foundation for the constitution of masculine subjectivities, but rather as starting points from a different theoretical position. It's more about primacy rather than foundationalism. When talking here about "male embodiment" and its lack in theorizing, I have in mind a particular understanding of the notion of "embodiment" which is mostly inherited from the phenomenological philosophical tradition and a specific understanding of "maleness," which comes mainly from the sexual difference paradigm as it was developed by Luce Irigaray. I will address this issue more in the third chapter when arguing for the ontological status of sexually differentiated bodies.

entrusted only to discursive realms.¹⁹ This “neo-disembodiment,” so to speak, visualizes male bodies *qua* representations or objects to be mere concepts. Male bodies, ironically in a perpetual struggle as “analytical categories” and as “real” referents, are thus rarely regarded as sources or agents of subjective and identity formations, being theoretically conceived of either as socially constructed or made intelligible through discursive accounts.²⁰ This may seem counterintuitive, given the multitude of feminist studies on female embodiment.²¹ It should not be surprising, however, since the dominant visibility of certain hegemonic male bodies and their representations (as white, heterosexual, middle aged, able, Christian men, in sports, business, military, music and film industries, etc.) goes hand in hand with the long modernist tradition of the body’s subordination and with its already established function within the capitalist processes of reproduction and consumption of bodies as representations (Lowe, 1995; Mort, 1996; Dewing and Foster, 2007; Featherstone, 2007; Seidler, 2007; Turner, 2008). The body’s subordination and instrumentalization is theoretically reproduced unfortunately in many of the studies, as well. As Victor J. Seidler (2006, p. 102) points out:

Rather than recognize how our bodies carry our emotional histories, postmodern theories often view the body as an external space onto which cultures inscribe prevailing representations. This fosters its own forms of cultural displacement, making it difficult for men to recognize ambivalences in their lived relationships with their bodies. Rather, the body as performance and display sustains an instrumentality that remains beyond question.

¹⁹ In short, the “divide” Rosi Braidotti is postulating in *Metamorphoses* (2002, pp. 28-34) is that between the politics of gender represented by the work of Judith Butler (in America) versus the philosophy of sexual difference by Luce Irigaray (in the continental Europe).

²⁰ Here representationalism is not referring to the conception according to which language is purported to represent an external reality (the very notion of discourse is meant to attack this position), but more to the idea that male bodies are made visible *qua* representations through imagistic and linguistic/discursive accounts.

²¹ See, for example, the work of Simone De Beauvoir, Sandra Lee Bartky, Iris Marion Young, Linda Alcoff, Toril Moi, Genevieve Lloyd, Kathleen Lennon, Moira Gatens, Elizabeth Grosz, Susan Bordo, Rosi Braidotti, Margrit Shildrick, and Gail Weiss. Feminist scholarship inquired various arenas and dimensions of social life in which women have been oppressed, including their bodies, body image issues, eating disorders, disability, cosmetic surgery, physical and sexual violence, self-defense, reproductive rights, and sexuality.