

ALMA MATER STUDIORUM – UNIVERSITÀ DI BOLOGNA

SCUOLA DI LINGUE E LETTERATURE, TRADUZIONE E INTERPRETAZIONE

Corso di Laurea Magistrale in Letterature Moderne, Compare e Postcoloniali

Curriculum: Women's and Gender Studies – Studi di Genere e delle Donne (GEMMA)

FAILED MASCULINITIES:

A CRITICAL RE-READING OF ERNEST HEMINGWAY'S

THE FIRST FORTY-NINE STORIES

Tesi di Laurea in Feminist Theory: Between Difference and Diversity

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«If “all men” are seriously to be taken as a political category, about the only things they actually have in common are their penises.»

R.W. Connell, “Theorising Gender” (1985)

«I nostri miti morti ormai / La scoperta di Hemingway.»

Francesco Guccini, “Incontro” (1972)

«In going where you have to go, and doing what you have to do, and seeing what you have to see, you dull and blunt the instrument you write with. But I would rather have it blent and dull and know I had to put it on the grindstone again and hammer it into shape and put a whetstone to it, and know that I had something to write about, than to have it bright and shining and nothing to say, or smooth and well-oiled in the closet, but unused.»

Ernest Hemingway, *Preface to The First Forty-Nine Stories* (1938)

ABSTRACT (English)

Ever since the 1960s Masculinity Studies have been an increasingly expanding niche in the spectrum of Gender Studies. Initially inspired by the feminist and homosexual fights against patriarchy, especially in the last three decades they have become an influential theoretical instrument for the broader process of deconstruction of normative ideological structures: mostly developed by the Australian scholar R.W. Connell at the end of the 20th century, formulations regarding the hegemonic models and the plurality of masculinities were pivotal for the discipline. This thesis attempts to introduce the most important theoretical aspects of the field in order to apply them to the analysis of the representation of masculinity in the 1938 collection *The First Forty-Nine Stories* by Ernest Hemingway. Commonly perceived by critics as typical depictions of a hegemonic and violent masculinity, actually the male protagonists of the author's fiction reveal themselves to be quite distant from the ordinary assumptions when studied under a different critical light. Indeed, by re-reading Hemingway's writings following the innovative approach of Masculinity Studies it was possible to demonstrate that the primary and secondary characters he created are actually hardly able to achieve ideal Western models of masculinity, and are rather represented as failing in the effort to fulfil social expectations.

Key Words: Hemingway; Hegemonic Masculinity; Failure; Masculinity Studies; Performativity.

ABSTRACT (Italian)

Sin dagli anni sessanta del Novecento gli Studi sulla Mascolinità sono stati una nicchia sempre più in espansione negli Studi di Genere. Ispiratisi inizialmente alle lotte femministe e omosessuali contro il patriarcato, negli ultimi tre decenni essi sono divenuti un influente strumento teorico nel più ampio processo di decostruzione delle strutture ideologiche normative: le formulazioni riguardanti i modelli egemonici e la pluralità delle mascolinità, sviluppati soprattutto dall' studioso Australiano R.W. Connell al termine del Ventesimo secolo, furono fondamentali per la disciplina. Questa tesi vuole introdurre gli aspetti teorici più importanti del campo di studi per poi applicarli all'analisi della rappresentazione delle mascolinità nella raccolta di Ernest Hemingway *The First Forty-Nine Stories*, pubblicata nel 1938. Comunemente considerati dai critici quali rappresentazioni di una mascolinità egemonica e violenta, in realtà i protagonisti maschili negli scritti dell'autore sono distanti da queste comuni considerazioni se studiati partendo da presupposti critici differenti. Infatti, seguendo l'innovativo approccio degli Studi sulla Mascolinità, la rilettura dell' opera di Hemingway ha reso possibile dimostrare che in realtà i personaggi principali e secondari dei suoi lavori non sono rappresentati quali uomini in grado di raggiungere con successo modelli occidentali ideali di mascolinità, ma piuttosto come fallimentari nel loro tentativo di soddisfare le aspettative sociali.

Key Words: Hemingway; Mascolinità Egemonica; Fallimento; Studi sulla Mascolinità; Performatività.

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«They say everything can be replaced / They say every distance is not near /

So I remember every face / Of every [one] who put me here.»

Bob Dylan, "I Shall Be Released" (1967)

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INTRODUCTION

Taking part in a Master's Degree in Women's and Gender Studies has been a deeply formative experience, not just from an academic point of view, but first and foremost, at a personal level. As a matter of fact, being a white, European, middle-class, heterosexual and cisgender man meant that features composing my identity were often put under a critical light in the processes of learning, defined as normative and usually connected to patriarchal power. Throughout my few sentient years, I more or less consciously tried to behave and think according to different manners from what I usually perceived to be socially imposed to me as a man as much as I could. Nevertheless, it is one thing to distance oneself from expectations, questioning one's self is another. When I started on this new path, I quickly realised that what I had done up to that moment would not satisfy me anymore. As much as I wanted to prove myself as far from normative patterns as possible to the people surrounding me, I mostly felt the duty to start thinking critically about who I was, and what being myself meant on a collective level. In the Master's microcosm I was a minority for the first time in my life, and even though I was only once directly accused for the wrongs of men, I was always conscious of my identity, something which had seldom happened before. This certainly helped in the process of self-awareness which was central not only for choosing to work on Masculinities for the two years of the Master's Degree programme and in my final thesis, but also in my daily life: indeed, I started to want to change my physicality, my word choices, and in general my behaviours, in order to distance myself even more than before from the hegemonic models taught and imposed since the beginning of our existence.

When last year I began to think about the possible contents of my final thesis, as I

already said masculinity was of course the issue I wanted to deal with: literature being my main academic interest, I thought that I could possibly analyse its representation in the works of an author. Ernest Hemingway came to mind as my first choice, not only because I thoroughly enjoy the contents, prose and style of his writings, but also because I knew, or rather I had always been taught, that he would provide an interesting number of examples of masculinity patterns which I would only later learn to define as hegemonic. I also chose his 1938 short story collection *The First Forty-Nine Stories* at an early stage to be the most suitable work to analyse, given the many situations and male types with which the author deals in the book and the fact that criticism often focuses on his novels; moreover, his shorter fiction has been usually less studied than his novels. Nevertheless, once I started re-reading his writings, I began to realise that the common assumption that the male characters of his work are to be read as representations of virile and violent masculinity only partially convinced me. It is undeniable that, at a superficial level, his characters might appear to be nearly stereotypical depictions of men, as well as women. A closer reading during which I tried to avoid critical preconceptions actually started to change my ideas regarding the author: even though those characters were attempting to adhere to a hegemonic ideal of masculinity, very few among them could in fact achieve the model they were trying to emulate. The idea of a failing masculinity started to form in my mind, as the more I read and re-read works by the writer, the more I observed similar patterns, in his short stories as well as in his novels.

Once I began to research about it, I found that a new approach to his work started to take shape after the publication of his posthumous novel *The Garden of Eden* in 1986, due to the treatment of issues such as androgyny and homosexuality in the book. Most of the critics concerned with gender issues in Hemingway's production were focusing

on his representation of women. Nevertheless, there was one among them who problematised the author's depiction of male characters, namely Thomas Strychacz, whose work introduced the idea that masculinity in the writer's production was theatrical in its core, and an audience was actually needed by men in order to prove their worth as such. Later formulations of gender performance by Judith Butler established the possibility that Strychacz's reading was in fact plausible: furthermore, if masculinity were indeed an act, it could very well present fallacies which would distance the performance from the expected ideal. Thus, I found my impressions supported by a minor, although solid, critical approach that inspired me to start with my research.

This work is divided in two main chapters, the first presenting an introduction to Masculinity Studies and the second the literary analysis of Hemingway's short stories. In the opening theoretical section, I wanted to treat the three main waves of theorisation that formed the field of study as it is today: as I am going to explain in a later moment, one of the most influential authors of the third wave was R.W. Connell, who introduced and expanded upon the central concepts of hegemonic masculinity and the plurality of masculinities. For this very reason most of the section will be dedicated to presenting his ideas as well as the inevitable criticism which was born after his formulations. The second part of the chapter is going to focus on the model of masculinity which had been developing in the Western world in the centuries after the end of the Middle Ages: due to my focus on Hemingway I chose to treat mostly the situation in the United States and the brief but central passage between 19th and 20th century, known as *fin de siècle*, in which the ideal of manhood both in the U.S. and in Europe was perceived to be suffering from a crisis, which was in reality rather an adjustment to the new social environment, provoked by events such as the advent of women in the public sphere and the industrialisation that Western society was then experiencing.

In the second chapter, after an introductory overview of Hemingway's life, I am going to present the most important critical contributions that shaped the ideas related to masculinity through which his production has been read so far. I will then proceed to the actual analysis of some short stories which I considered most suitable for my research, even though I deem that a similar perspective could indeed be useful for the examination of any of his written works. Studying Hemingway's short fiction means being able to take into account a more diverse set of traditionally male types whom the author deeply admired, such as the boxer, the big-game hunter, or the *torero*. These characters, among others, can also be found in his novels and non-fiction, and are part of the writer's canonical pantheon of protagonists, all of them apparently following a manly code of "grace under pressure", made of honour and courage in the face of great dangers. The short stories I selected for my analysis deal with types similar to those aforementioned, and were those that provided better examples for my thesis: nevertheless, I also included references to other pieces of writing found in *The First Forty-Nine Stories* in order to demonstrate how the study of masculinity applied to Hemingway's production can actually be relevant for a wider selection of his works.

Re-reading works of literature under a different light is a necessary step towards innovative reconsiderations of those same writings: furthermore, applying formulations provided by Masculinity Studies means that it is possible to change "not only our perceptions of male characters and manly ideas but the focus of criticism as well" (Riemer 12). This would open it to critical analysis, a step forward towards the deconstruction of hegemonic gender models that have been preserving patriarchal power. With my thesis, I wish to operate within this new critical approach in order to problematise not only a central author of the Western canon, but also the paradigms of masculinity which have been determining the lives of men and women to this day.

CHAPTER 1

1.1. Introduction to Masculinity Studies

After more than five decades of discussion and practice, it would appear that Masculinity Studies have managed to create an important space of knowledge in the wider academic field of Gender Studies. Within the feminist fight against patriarchy, it seems crucial that researchers have decided to tackle issues concerning masculinity. Although much has been done in order to formulate strong theoretical instruments for the understanding of masculinity in its different configurations, the road towards a change in discourses and practices still seems long and winding. Thus, I deem necessary some further theoretical or practical endeavour focusing on masculinities.

This first chapter of my research is divided in two sections: the purpose of the first part is to introduce the different theoretical developments that helped shaping the field of studies as it is to this day. Since the 1960s there have been three waves of theorisation which, following the lead of the formulations by Feminist Studies, were necessary steps for the formation of contemporary theories related to the analysis of masculinity. In the 2004 encyclopaedia edited by Michael Kimmel and Amy Aronson, the entry “masculinities” starts with a brief definition of the concept:

[It] refers to the social roles, behaviors, and meanings prescribed for men in any given society at any one time. As such, the term emphasizes gender, not biological sex, and the diversity of identities among different groups of men. Although we experience gender to be an internal facet of identity, masculinities are produced within the institutions of society and through our daily interactions. (503)

Nevertheless, in order to achieve the quoted contemporary definition, the question of

masculinity has gone through several stages: some were distinguished by progressive and pro-feminist features, for instance those born during the social and political fights of the 1960s, whereas others were characterised by rather conservative tendencies, such as those of the Mythopoetic Men's Movement which became popular during the 1990s. The third wave of theorisation started during the same period, but developed much different formulations: its most important representative is R.W. Connell, who has demonstrated not only how the concept of masculinity has been reshaping throughout history, but also that it would be incorrect and simplistic to talk about it in the singular form since, on the one hand, it does not follow a unique and linear pattern in the formation of identities, and, on the other hand, it should be considered alongside other crucial paradigms such as sexuality, class, ethnicity and age, to name but a few. The scholar also developed the concept of hegemonic masculinity, a patriarchal set of gender behaviours and ideals which are socially accepted and imposed to men: even though a limited amount of them can actually achieve this model, most are complicit to its maintenance. Moreover, women are not the only individuals who are subjected to the patriarchal order: as a matter of fact, Connell deems that other forms of masculinities are either subordinated, for instance in the case of homosexuals, or marginalised, for example black or working-class men (*Masculinities* 76-81). His formulations and those of other scholars will be more thoroughly analysed in the first section of my research.¹

After having introduced Masculinity Studies and their different stages of theorisation, I am going to proceed by dealing with the modern Western model of masculinity and its developments, approximately from the 16th to the beginning of the 20th century. The research will mostly treat the passage at the *fin de siècle* of the 19th century, during which the ideal went through an adjustment to the new social and

¹ The work in which Connell introduced the concept of hegemonic masculinity was *Gender and Power* (1987); he later developed this concept, alongside his perception of the plurality of masculinities in *Masculinities* (1993).

political situations of the period. Due to the fact that the following chapter of this work will focus on Ernest Hemingway, a specific part of the second section will be concerned with the history of masculinity in the United States of America.

1.1.1. First Wave: the Profeminist Movement

The origin of the literature concerned with masculinity is to be found in the United States between the end of the 1960s and the early years of the following decade. In the cultural uprising of that period, women and gay liberation movements were fighting against both patriarchy and normative heterosexuality, questioning male power in the private and public spheres. This situation led to a first wave of theoretical studies and practical proposals, which would continue until the beginning of the 1980s.

Traditional sex roles, until then considered as based on genetic features of male and female beings, were put under critical scrutiny by a series of authors: they recognized that the male role, acknowledged now as socially constructed and imposed rather than originated from nature, was oppressive not only for women, but also for men. According to Carrigan, Connell and Lee in their 1985 article “Toward a New Sociology of Masculinity”, four are the main themes of the written production concerned with masculinity during this period: the first, already mentioned, is the burden of traditional masculinity that weighs and oppresses men, some of whom might feel uncomfortable because of the social expectations required to their gender. The second point is that for this very reason, men need their own liberation from the patriarchal system, thus leading to the third theme which is concerned with understanding the origins of hegemonic masculinity as such and how it could be changed. The final issue is grounded on the realisation that society at large was experiencing a substantial modification in sexuality and gender, which men should accept and deal with (Carrigan, Connell and Lee 568-

69).

One of the most notable profeminist authors of the period was Joseph Pleck, who outstood among many of his fellow scholars. His aim was to define masculinity as construction rather than as biologically determined, an inconsistent role that most probably would change in accordance to the various stages of a lifetime. Another important concept that he expanded upon was the

connection between the subordination of women and the hierarchy of power among men. This hierarchy [was] maintained in terms of wealth, physical strength, age, and heterosexuality, and the competition among men to assert themselves in these terms produce[d] a considerable amount of conflict. (571)

Pleck asserted that the norms of the patriarchal system not only defined the relationship between women and men, but also men's relationship with other men: indeed, hierarchies among men were based on ideals of masculinity as provided by society. The author acknowledges a stratification of men “according to physical strength and athletic ability in the early years; later in life it focuses on success with women and ability to make money,” as well as on differences “between gay and straight men” (ibid. 84). Although an early attempt to theorise masculine internal hegemony, Pleck introduced a theme that would become central for later stages of Masculinity Studies.

The theoretical production of the period existed alongside a profeminist Men's Liberation Movement: although of a lesser scale and impact with respect to its female counterpart, the movement was formed by men who, aware of the oppression caused by sexism, were ready to subvert the patriarchal order. Men were “starting their own consciousness-raising groups, analyzing and trying to change their roles in patriarchal institutions, and endeavoring to forge non-sexist masculinities” (Adams and Savran 4).

Similarly to second wave feminism, to which it owes in a way its foundational premises, the Men's Liberation movement and the theoretical discussion related to it were in later years criticised for taking into consideration a very specific form of masculinity: a white, Western, heterosexual, middle-class model was more or less implicitly regarded as 'normal,' rather than being presented as the normative hegemonic paradigm which subsequent analytic approaches to masculinities would acknowledge.

If on the one hand the above-mentioned men's movement found fertile soil in the radical and counter-cultural environment, on the other hand a more conservative and anti-feminist branch grew from the social uprising: this was incarnated in the Movement for Men's Rights, born during the second half on the 1970s (Kimmel and Aronson 531). At its core was the idea that feminism was wrongly accusing men of being the privileged sex: “either men and women [were] both equally oppressed by their traditional gender roles or, if anything, men [were] more oppressed by their traditional gender role” (ibid.). The lives and experiences of men, according to the movement's ideological premises, were burdened by their roles as bread-winners, providers for the family and protectors: patriarchy made them victims of social expectations rather than privileged human beings. Several organisations were founded during the late 1970s and early 1980s, some of which still exist today: for instance, the National Congress for Men and Children.²

In its less conservative and reactionary conformations, the first wave of Masculinity Studies and the movement related to it were a starting point for the field, although lacking certain aspects which would be considered as central to the discussion by

² The focus on children is interesting, as the movement considered that men were discriminated with regards to parental custody issues. It is not by chance that the novel *Kramer vs Kramer* by author Avery Corman was published in 1977 and later successfully adapted for the silver screen in 1979, receiving five Academy Awards the following year. As a matter of fact, male parenting and child custody are central to the plot: the movie presents a positive image of the protagonist who, obsessed by his job, once abandoned by his wife has to face the duties and complications of fatherhood, at first with difficulty but eventually succeeding. See also Kimmel and Aronson (454-55).

following scholars. Nevertheless, a more progressive understanding of masculinity is to be found in the theories of the gay movement that was spreading in the United States and Europe during the same period. As a matter of fact, according to Carrigan, Connell and Lee, it is in this theoretical production that

emerges [...] the very important concept of *hegemonic masculinity*, not as “the male role,” but as a particular variety of masculinity to which others - among them young and effeminate as well as homosexual men - are subordinated. It is particular groups of men, not men in general, who are oppressed within patriarchal sexual relations, and whose situations are related in different ways to the overall logic of the subordination of women to men. A consideration of homosexuality thus provides the beginnings of a dynamic conception of masculinity as a structure of social relations. (587)

The concept of hegemonic masculinity would become central to the discussion during the third wave of theorisation: the gay movement gave way to a consideration of masculinity as a hierarchical system within itself, thus granting the foundation of a successful tool of analysis for later scholars and activists. However, before arriving at further and more grounded theoretical developments, the field of studies went through a more conservative phase, the analysis of which is the focus of the next section.

1.1.2. Second Wave: the Mythopoetic Men's Movement

The second wave of production and activities which shaped Masculinity Studies started rooting in the 1980s. A popular and debated movement, characterised by conservative inclinations, took hold of the public stage: it was the Mythopoetic Men's Movement, which, according to Adams and Savran, has represented “something of a backlash against feminism” (5). The movement was led by the American poet Robert Bly, who

started writing about themes and ideas connected to his later production during the early years of the decade: he gained public attention in the year 1990, when both a television special named “A Gathering of Men” was aired, and his book *Iron John* was published, which was later to become the best selling non-fiction work of the year.

The foundations of this movement were certainly reactionary: generally speaking, its supporters more or less explicitly claimed that contemporary men had been emasculated by a series of factors such as industrialisation and the feminisation of society. The solution was to be found in the organisation of homosocial gatherings of men, in which discussions were supported by poetry and myths reading – thus its denomination. The ultimate goal was to introduce men to a “deep masculine” subconscious energy, which had to be rediscovered and reached in order to shape a renewed manhood. Considering that a later section of this work will deal with the 19th century *fin de siècle* reaction to the perceived crisis of masculinity, which shared many elements of the Mythopoetic Movement, it might be interesting to present Bly's main ideas and their consequent pro-feminist critique.

The author opens his book *Iron John* by stating that:

it is clear to men that the images of adult manhood given by the popular culture are worn out; a man can no longer depend on them. By the time a man is thirty-five he knows that the images of the right man, the tough man, the true man which he received in high school do not work in life. Such man is open to new visions of what a man is or could be.

(ix)

These visions Bly talks about are to be reached by means of old myths of popular culture, which can be the guidance for the contemporary man who is looking for change, introspection and personal evolution. A central issue around which the book is

built is the idea of the male initiation, that is to say the passage from the mother's to the father's realm, aided by older male mentors.

Robert Bly makes use of “Iron John,” a fairy tale collected by the Grimm Brothers, for his purpose of depicting a wholesome and correct path towards the discovery of the “deep masculine.” To follow his argument, it is enough to present the first half of the tale:³

Once upon a time, a hunter volunteers to go into the woods and find out why the King had lost several of his men. The hunter returned with a Wild Man, who had lived at the bottom of a lake, and had apparently been devouring the others. The King put the Wild Man in a cage in the courtyard. One day, the King's 8 year old son was playing near the cage with a [golden] ball. The ball rolled into the cage. To get it back, the Wild Man made the boy promise to get the key to his cage and free him. The key was under the boy's mother's pillow. The boy stole the key from under his mother's pillow and opened the cage. The Wild Man walked off into the woods with the boy. (Kimmel and Kaufman 19-20)

If we are to read it according to Bly's interpretation, the tale figures as a metaphor for the young boy's induction in the adult male realm. The Wild Man, or Iron John, represents that “deep masculine” which the Mythopoetic leader wishes his followers to achieve: he lies in the deepest areas of a man's psyche (the lake), and it takes a great effort to discover him. Not only does he have to be exposed, but also accepted, as he owns the man's “primordial energy” (the golden ball): the only way of reaching him is by distancing oneself from the female world which has guided men until this point (the key to the cage lies beneath the mother's pillow) and by freeing him from the social

³ I decided to use the tale as recounted by Kimmel and Kaufman in “Weekend Warriors: the New Men's Movement,” because of the clarity of their summary. For the complete tale see “Iron Hans,” in Philip Pullman, *Grimm Tales For Young and Old* (350-60).

order which has been obstructing his liberty by constraining him into a restricting environment (the cage). Once the man releases and accepts Iron John, he has to distance himself from the female values by which he has been surrounded (the boy runs away).

Bly's analysis of this tale becomes his recommended path to men's rediscovery of their true essence. He declares that "every modern male has, lying at the bottom of his psyche, a large, primitive being covered with hair down to his feet. Making contact with this Wild Man is the step the Eighties male or the Nineties male has yet to take" (6). According to the poet, a key moment for the crisis of male identity took place during the Industrial Revolution, as the removal of the father from the house led young boys to be lacking a male figure during most of their rearing: "if the father inhabits the house only for an hour or two in the evenings, then women's values, marvellous as they are, will be the only values in the house" (20). This leads, Bly believes, to the everlasting damage of the father-son relationship, necessary in the formation of "true men": by bonding with the father, boys become aware of what being a man means, and learn the "male mode of feeling," as the author asserts in his interview contained in the TV-special "A Gathering of Men". Furthermore, the young boy needs to be initiated into the male world, but the father cannot be the initiator, as there is apparently too much tension between the two. For this reason, older men have to be responsible, like in some traditional unspecified cultures to which Bly hints at: these figures are mentors, "male mothers," according to the poet's definition.

Even if the Mythopoetic Men's Movement attracted great numbers of men at its gatherings, and also gained a wide mass media coverage at the time, the pro-feminist Men's movement which had been shaping during the previous decades had not faded away: as a matter of fact, it radically criticised the foundations of the Mythopoetic Movement, blaming it for being essentialist, misogynist and homophobic, to name but a

few of the charges. It might be interesting to present some points raised by the detractors of the Mythopoetic Movement in order to have an idea of the most controversial claims contained in Robert Bly's book.⁴

One of the first aspects of the Mythopoetic Movement which critics disapproved is the range of men to which it relates: although it is never clearly defined, and Bly even makes a lame attempt not to exclude women and homosexuals from the conversation (x), it is obvious that the work is directed towards the white, heterosexual, middle-class men and their perceived distress. Kimmel and Kaufman demonstrate that in the attendance to the meetings of the movement

men of color ranged [...] from zero to less than 2 percent, while never greater than 5 percent of the attendees were homosexual men. [...] Professional, white collar and managerial levels were present in far greater proportion than blue collar and working class men, in part because the expense of the weekend retreats (usually \$200 to \$500 for a weekend) or the day-long seminars (\$50 to \$200) make the retrieval of deep manhood a journey open only to the economically privileged. (18)

A movement which claimed to be providing necessary tools for the recovery of a “deep masculinity”, revealed itself to be indeed of a very limited extent: not only was it exclusive to a specific group of men, but it also reiterated the idea of a normative hegemonic masculinity which, rather than holding a great set of privileges, was thought to be going through a deep crisis of its foundational values.

Furthermore, according to Bly the crisis of masculinity started with the Industrial Revolution, as the only values left in the household were the mother's, whereas fathers were forced to work far from the family. The essentialism of these ideas is evident: the

⁴ For a more complete discussion about the matter, see Kimmel (1995).

poet assumes that manhood and womanhood are defined qualities related to one's sex, rather than socially constructed ideals perpetuated at social and personal levels. Not only are these premises unacceptable, but as Harry Brod demonstrates, the Industrial Revolution did not lead to a dissolution of patriarchal power in the family, but rather to an institutionalisation of patriarchy itself: “with the shift from preindustrial or precapitalist to capitalist patriarchy, [...] power is taken out of scattered individual male hands and centralized in more controllable and controlling collective institutions: the state, the market, the military” (91-92), traditionally male institutions which to this day continue to be strongly controlled by men.

According to Bly (22), men need to be initiated into manhood by older male mentors: although it is not clear throughout the book what manhood actually means, he makes references to older tales and myths, such as the story of *Iron John* or the figure of Zeus as an ideal of male authority, a symbolic power given to men for the sake of the community. The leader of the Mythopoetic movement refers to traditional cultures in order to demonstrate his ideas: nevertheless, critics have pointed out not only how this behaviour implies a cultural appropriation, but also how very selective the author appears to be about which aspects of those cultures to choose. They tend to be de-contextualised and misunderstood: indeed, Bly argues that the rituals were detached from the relation of hierarchy between women and men; in fact, what other scholars stressed is that “what we actually learn from non-industrial cultures [...] is that these initiation ceremonies, rituals, and separate spheres have everything to do with women's inequality” (Kimmel and Kaufman 29).

Another issue which critics have felt the need to dismantle is the underlying homophobia of Robert Bly and the movement in general. In *Iron John*, homosexuality is seldom taken into consideration, claiming that “it wasn't until the eighteenth century

that people ever used the term homosexual; [...] the mythology [...] does not make a big distinction between homosexual and heterosexual men” (x). It is nevertheless irresponsible, according to Murray, to avoid the discussion of homoeroticism on the basis of the social construction of homosexuality (209). As a matter of fact, many instances of traditional male initiation were determined by homoerotic practices: for instance, in some cultures “the 'substance almost like food' that passes from the older body to the younger is often semen, passing not as the boy stands next to the older man, but as they engage in fellatio or anal sexual intercourse” (ibid. 210).

The Mythopoetic Men's Movement and its most important representative have been accused of essentialism, anti-feminism and misogyny, homophobia, and cultural appropriation. Nevertheless, it has also been praised for its ability to draw (some) men closer to their emotions and feelings. Although the apparent good intentions of the movement have been somehow acknowledged, overall its premises have been deemed unacceptable in the path of a healthy improvement for men: as Beneke declares, “men certainly need to change, but not under the banner of masculinity” (159).

1.1.3. Third Wave: Masculinities

It is necessary for the understanding of my later literary analysis to delve now into some of the most important theoretical aspects that have been defining the third wave of Masculinity Studies. Although it is true that the Mythopoetic Men's Movement held the public stage between the end of the 1980s and early 1990s, the final decade of the century witnessed the formation of new perspectives related to the study of masculinity. Following the lead of the third wave of feminism, scholars started to question concepts which had been previously debated within and without the academia. For instance, the ideas of hegemonic masculinity and internal hegemony were reprised from earlier

writings, developed and even criticised by a growing academic community: a variety of authors led to a process of problematisation which continues up to this day. Central in this sense is the concept of gender performativity, introduced by Judith Butler in 1990 with her work *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. Gender, according to the author, is not to be considered as an essence but rather as a performance: nevertheless, Adams and Savran point out that “[d]escribing gender as performance did not mean that it was a supplemental or voluntary aspect of identity; rather, it was a set of mandatory practices imposed from birth and repeated again and again in a doomed effort to get it right” (4). Furthermore, in order to avoid an essentialist perspective, the gender categories of masculinity and femininity are not to be related anymore to a person's male and female biological sex, as in the previous decades. A central author of the period was R.W. Connell: he developed his theories around the concept of hegemonic masculinity which, although not completely original, was studied by the scholar in a more systematic way. Connected to the idea of hegemony was the idea of the plurality of masculinities, a fundamental contribution to the field. Groundbreaking as they were, his arguments were not spared from criticism.

R.W. Connell's idea of hegemonic masculinity started to grow at the end of the 1980s. In his 1986 article “Theorising Gender”, he criticises the essentialist inclination of some sectors of feminism to consider men as a definite group: he wryly suggests that “[i]f 'all men' are seriously to be taken as a political category, about the only things they actually have in common are their penises” (265). This universalising tendency which related the individual's biological sex to social factors was clearly fuelled with an essentialism which feminist criticism should have avoided. The scholar claims that rather than grouping men under a heterogeneous banner, feminism should acknowledge differences among men and dynamics of fluidity as much as it had recognized

differences among women (ibid. 266-67). During the same period, in a separated although akin discourse, Butler would analyse the common tendency to explain gender patterns by a biological interpretation. Connell considers gender as a constraining social structure; nevertheless, he declares that its power “is found not in its geometry so much as in its fluid dynamics, the logic of its historical transformation” (ibid. 267). The scholar considers his formulation to be a better instrument of understanding masculinity if compared to the “sex role theory” which was developed in the early years of the discussion: indeed, he underlines how the role framework tends not to distinguish between the lives of men in their concrete reality and the social expectation related to the idea of masculinity (Carrigan, Connell and Lee 578-79). Sex role theory reveals itself to be deeply essentialist by asserting the idea that a pre-social and biological male role actually exists, and personalities which happen to be distant from the ideal are to be considered as deviant. Individual experiences are put aside, thus theorising an uncritical perspective with regards to identity.

It was in 1987 that Connell wrote in his *Gender and Power* the few pages which would become “the most cited source for the concept of hegemonic masculinity” (Connell and Messerschmidt 831) in the years to follow. He introduces the chapter by stating again how it is commonly assumed that masculinity, as well as femininity, are both defined by only one set of traits, a “unitary model of sexual characters” which, more or less explicitly, is a “familiar part of sexual ideology” (*Power* 167). Connell declares that actually, within our society, there is a system of power by which a hegemonic form of masculinity is constructed in relation to women and to a series of subordinated masculinities: it becomes necessary to acknowledge “[t]he interplay between different forms of masculinity” in order to understand “how a patriarchal social order works” (ibid. 183). Following Gramsci’s definition, Connell understands

hegemony as

a social ascendancy achieved in a play of social forces which extends beyond contests of brute power into the organization of private life and cultural processes. Ascendancy of one group of men over another achieved at the point of a gun, or by the threat of unemployment, is not hegemony. Ascendancy which is embedded in religious doctrine and practice, mass media content, wage structures, the design of housing, welfare/taxation policies and so forth, is. (ibid. 184)

Although not necessarily a feature of hegemonic masculinity, violence is related to it, whether in its physical or in its epistemic form, as they are commonly found combined. Connell also points out that hegemony is not equivalent to “cultural dominance, the obliteration of alternatives”: as a matter of fact, in a later section of this chapter there will be a discussion of the idea that other groups are subjected rather than annihilated by the hegemonic ideal (ibid.). Connected to this idea, Demetrakis Demetriou would expand, in a later critique of Connell's work, upon the patterns of power of hegemonic masculinity: he distinguishes between external hegemony, “connected to the institutionalization of men's dominance over women”, and internal hegemony, meaning dominance over subordinated masculinities (341).

Connell identifies relations of labour, power and *cathexis*, or emotional attachment. Speaking of labour, the author states that men profit from a symbolical as well as a material benefit in capitalist countries: writing in 1995, he acknowledges that men control a “major block of capital”, gaining an exclusive *patriarchal dividend* (*Masculinities* 82). With regards to power relations, Connell focuses on state power and violence: men hold power within the institutions such as the state and the army. Patriarchal definitions of masculinity connect it to virility and violence, whereas

femininity is expected to be vulnerable and dependent on masculinity. Relations of cathexis, although changed after the “stabilization of lesbian and gay sexuality as a public alternative within the heterosexual order” (ibid. 85), are still characterised by male and heterosexual superiority.

Concerning internal hegemony, Connell distinguishes forms of relations of power among masculinities, namely patterns of domination, subordination, complicity and marginalisation. Hegemony, as already stated, is “the masculinity that occupies the hegemonic position in a given pattern of gender relations, a position always contestable”, thus being “a historically mobile relation” (ibid. 76-77). This form of masculinity is more exalted than others because it guarantees male dominance in society; nevertheless, as a behavioural and ideal pattern it might only be rigorously practiced by a limited number of men. Yet, most men are granted the patriarchal dividend, and are advantaged by hegemony: this majority which has “connection with the hegemonic project but [does] not embody hegemonic masculinity” (ibid. 79) is defined by Connell as complicit masculinity. The scholar asserts that

[m]arriage, fatherhood and community life often involve extensive compromises with women rather than naked domination or an uncontested display of authority. A great many men who draw the patriarchal dividend also respect their wives and mothers, are never violent towards women, do their accustomed share of the housework, bring home the family wage, and can easily convince themselves that feminists must be bra-burning extremists. (ibid. 79-80)

If hegemonic and complicit masculinities are dominant in the power spectrum of contemporary society, they hold a subjecting role over subordinated masculinities. According to Connell, the relation between heterosexual and homosexual men in

modern society might be the most important example of subordination within groups of men. Nevertheless, homosexuality is not the only subjected form of masculinity. Subordination is characterised by cultural stigmatisation, but also by material practices such as political and cultural exclusion, abuse, legal and street violence, economic discrimination and personal boycotts (ibid. 78). Hegemonic, complicit and subordinated masculinities are considered by Connell internal to the gender order. However, they are not enough to define other forms of masculinity which are considered as marginal, generated from the “interplay of gender with other structures such as class and race” (ibid. 80): obvious examples of marginalisation are working-class and/or black masculinities. Connell concludes his remarks about the social organization of masculinity by emphasizing that “terms such as 'hegemonic masculinity' and 'marginalized masculinities' name not fixed character types but configurations of practice generated in particular situations in a changing structure of relationships” (ibid. 81). The author also indicates those practices which are part of the formation and preservation of either external or internal hegemonic masculinity, the so-called “political techniques of the patriarchal social order” (Carrigan, Connell and Lee 594). First of all Connell designates persuasion as a tool of constitution, to be found mostly in contemporary commercial mass media: as a practical example he indicates advertisement for a symbolic location “in which images of masculinity are constructed and put to work: amplifying the sense of virility, creating anxiety and giving reassurance about being a father, playing games with stereotypes” (ibid.). A second fundamental step in the formation of hegemonic masculinity is the division of labour, closely connected to the processes related to the aforementioned internal hegemony: indeed, there is a tendency to define professional occupations either as “men's job” or “women's job”, a propensity which is easily detected in daily life. Finally, the state has a central

role in the construction of hegemonic masculinity, as it holds the power to choose for instance which identities are to be considered legal or to give economic and social advantages to normative patterns: a clear example of it is the criminalisation of homosexuality. The processes here indicated clearly demonstrate how fluid and historically generated the conception of hegemonic masculinity, and all the forms related to it, are. Connell considers gender not only as a product, but also a producer of history: he defines “gender practice as onto-formative, as constituting reality, and it is a crucial part of this idea that social reality is dynamic in time. [...] To recognize masculinity and femininity as historical [...] is not to suggest they are flimsy or trivial. It is to locate them firmly in the world of social agency” (*Masculinities* 81).

With regards to the maintenance of hegemonic masculinity, it is worth considering the arguments by Sharon Bird, who studied the importance of homosociality in the legitimation of privileged forms of masculinity. According to the definition given by Lipman-Bluman, who developed the concept in the mid 1970s, homosociality is

the seeking, enjoyment, and/or preference for the company of the same sex. It is distinguished from 'homosexual' in that it does not *necessarily* involve (although it may under certain circumstances) an explicit erotic sexual interaction between members of the same sex. [...] It is a process that is [...] channeled and encouraged by the entire range of social institutions within which male live. (16)

Following this premise, Bird proposes that homosociality among heterosexual men should be considered as a device for the maintenance of patriarchal privilege and normative behaviours. Three central meanings which the scholar establishes as perpetuated by male homosociality are emotional detachment, competition, and sexual objectification of women (Bird 122). First of all men, in order to fall into a normative

box, should keep away from the communication of emotions: “to express feeling is to reveal vulnerabilities and weaknesses; to withhold such expression is to maintain control” (ibid.). The devaluation of emotivity, a character typically related to the female patriarchal ideal, leads to a devaluation of womanhood in itself, as sensitivity is represented as a weakness. Hegemony is clearly built upon essentialist premises which degrade the female sex. Then, competition among men not only helps in establishing oneself as a truly distinguished masculine individual against the others, but also perpetuates male dominance (ibid. 127): indeed, a lack of equality within a group of individuals leads to a hierarchical type of society. Finally, another form of maintenance of male superiority within homosocial groups is the sexual objectification of women, which according to Bird “facilitates self-conceptualization as positively male by distancing the self from all that is associated with being female” (ibid. 123). Following Connell's study on the dynamics of masculinity, the scholar acknowledges the existence of personal dissatisfaction with the hegemonic norms: nevertheless, she claims that “[w]hen individual departures from dominant masculinity are experienced as private dissatisfactions rather than as reason for contesting the social construction of masculinity, hegemonic patterns persist” (ibid. 131). Consequently, assumptions related to an essentialist ideal of maleness must be challenged at an individual and social level: society should accomplish what Bird calls the *degenderization* of meanings (ibid.), a dismissal of preconceptions leading to a less constrained set of expectations.

Although recognised as a necessary stage for masculinity studies, R.W. Connell's theoretical formulations were not spared from criticism in the years following his publications. In order to present a more complete insight of the scholar's theories it might be interesting to briefly introduce the debate which resulted from critical readings of Connell's work.

In his 2001 “Connell's Concept of Hegemonic Masculinity: a Critique,” the already quoted Demetrakis Demetriou proposes a theoretical shift from the idea of hegemonic masculinity to that of masculine bloc. By this he means a hybrid connection of different practices devised for the construction of the best scheme to reproduce the patriarchal order: “its constant hybridization, its constant appropriation of diverse elements from various masculinities [...] makes the hegemonic bloc capable of reconfiguring itself and adapting to the specificities of new historical conjunctures” (348). By adopting certain features of subjected and marginalised masculinities, the hegemonic bloc attempts to make itself immune to socio-historical mutations. According to Demetriou, Connell fails to acknowledge the role of non-hegemonic masculinities in the formative process of the hegemonic system, thus creating a dualism which distinguishes configurations of practices (ibid. 347). The idea of a masculine bloc, on the other hand, might succeed where the concept of hegemonic masculinity fails, that is in considering the incorporation of “diverse and apparently oppositional elements” within the masculinity that “occupies the hegemonic position at a given historical moment” (ibid. 349).

Demetriou was not the only scholar who criticised Connell's formulations of the concept: although acknowledged as a fundamental step in the direction of a more comprehensive theory of masculinity, Connell's work attracted many other critiques, which s/he and James Messerschmidt tackled in the 2005 article “Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept.” The authors try to address criticism by examining some of the most common issues related to it: for this research, it might be useful to present their responses.⁵

A number of poststructuralist theorists claimed that the concept of masculinity was flawed as it continued to be “framed within a heteronormative conception of gender that essentializes male-female difference and ignores difference and exclusion within the

⁵ For the entire section see Connell and Messerschmidt (2005).

gender categories” (Connell and Messerschmidt 836). Although the authors do recognise that the tendency to dichotomise the male-female experience exists, they claim that it is easily found for instance in pop psychology, in the Mythopoetic Men's movement or in popular interpretations of sex-difference research rather than in Connell's own formulations: they reiterate once again the idea that “[m]asculinity is not a fixed entity embedded in the body or personal traits of individuals. Masculinities are configurations of practice that are accomplished in social action and, therefore, can differ according to the gender relations in a particular social setting” (ibid.). Critics also wondered about who does actually represent hegemonic masculinity: the answer to the question is easily found in Connell's work, who nevertheless repeats that first of all, the ideal of hegemonic masculinity normally expresses a fantasy rather than actual experiences, a role which gets reiterated by mass-media and other patriarchal forms of social practice which give relevance to one ideal over the others. Connell and Messerschmidt wish to “eliminate any usage of hegemonic masculinity as a fixed, transhistorical model. This usage violates the historicity of gender and ignores the massive evidence of change in social definitions of masculinity” (ibid. 838).

Hegemonic masculinity has also been seen as a concept defined by the reification of toxic practices. The authors claim that hegemony is often related to negativity, because of its reiteration of dominance of men over women and other forms of masculinity. Nevertheless, given its numerous expressions, violence and toxic practices are not the only features of the ideal: for instance, “most accounts of hegemonic masculinity do include such 'positive' actions as bringing home a wage, sustaining a sexual relationship, and being a father” (ibid. 840). Once again inspired by Gramsci's formulations, Connell deems that a masculinity solely based on violence and aggression would lead to domination rather than hegemony, which is an “idea that embeds certain

notions of consent and participation by the subaltern groups” (ibid. 841). Several scholars argue that within the configuration of hegemonic masculinity, the subject is made invisible: masculinity is believed to represent the positioning of men within discursive practices rather than a certain kind of man. The authors “flatly disagree” with such a consideration of his theoretical production, asserting that

[m]asculinity is defined as a configuration of practice organized in relation to the structure of gender relations. Human social practice creates gender relations in history. The concept of hegemonic masculinity embeds a historically dynamic view of gender in which it is impossible to erase the subject. (ibid. 843)

The formulations of hegemonic masculinity and masculinities remain necessary and fundamental for any study concerned with said subject matters, even by the author's admission. Connell introduced an innovative and somehow revolutionary tool for the analysis and consideration of masculinity, relevant to a number of subjects within and outside the academia. Given its theoretical width, it obviously attracted a number of critiques: nevertheless, they actually helped to shape the concept into a more comprehensive instrument of understanding, rather than reducing its importance.

It is useful now to take into consideration the works by Judith Butler, which did help to shape and renew feminist theory: the main issue with which this work is concerned regards the theories of gender performativity that Butler introduced to Women's Studies in 1990 with her now classic work *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. The author's main concern was to deconstruct heterosexist assumptions that certain types of feminism were relating to gender, the proprieties of which seemed to be restricted to fixed ideals of the masculine/feminine dichotomy: for Butler, “feminism ought to be careful not to idealize certain expressions of gender that

[...] produce new forms of hierarchy and exclusion” (*Gender Trouble* viii). While up to that point Women’s Studies took categories of sex, gender and sexuality as stable references, the author questioned their theoretical use. The notion of an essentialist 'original gender' is challenged by analysing cultural experiences such as drag and cross-dressing. By parodically imitating what is considered to be as natural behaviours, they lead to the displacement of those same characters into a fluidity that “deprives hegemonic culture and its critics of the claim to naturalized or essentialist gender identities. [...] Gender parody reveals that the original identity after which gender fashions itself is an imitation without an origin” (ibid. 188). Butler deems that the 'normal' gender results into a failed ideal which nobody can in fact embody (ibid. 189), thus reminding of Connell's formulations according to which hegemonic masculinity is a model which only a very limited number of people might achieve. Gender cannot be considered as a defined fact, but rather as a series of acts without which there would be no ideal at all. Butler explains:

[T]he action of gender requires a performance that is repeated. This repetition is at once a reenactment and reexperiencing of a set of meanings already socially established. [...] There are temporal and collective dimensions to these actions; [...] indeed, the performance is effected with the strategic aim of maintaining gender within its binary frame - an aim that cannot be attributed to a subject, but, rather, must be understood to found and consolidate the subject. (ibid. 191)

A true and fixed gender cannot be declared to exist, if not in the attempt to impose mandatory and normative regulations within the binary heterosexist system of patriarchy, thus strategically concealing the performative feature of gender (ibid. 192). Nevertheless, this idea of performativity should not be taken to imply a consciousness

of this process on the subject's part, as though it was making a choice between different possible identities: the author rejects the idea that “one woke in the morning, perused the closet or some more open space for the gender of choice, donned that gender for the day, and then restored the garment to its place at night” (*Bodies* ix). The subject does not voluntarily follow and repeat gender practices: as a matter of fact, we are born and raised within a number of norms (such as gendered, racial, and national), which are incorporated and repeated, and lead us to live our life according to certain expectations without a complete consciousness of it (*Gender Trouble* 117).

The theoretical production of authors such as Connell and Butler inspired the blooming of several different perspectives with regard to gender and masculinity, among which the work by Judith/Jack Halberstam is found. His writings focus primarily on the concept of female masculinity, which although not new to gender studies,⁶ he elaborates in several texts, trying to move “the discourse from a stigmatized to a positive view of female masculinity” (Gardiner 607). In his book *Female Masculinity*, Halberstam attacks the essentialist idea that masculinity is inevitably attached to the male body. In order to deconstruct normative symbolical patterns, he presents a series of masculine women such as tomboys, butches, and female-to-male transgenders. The author claims that Masculinity Studies have been mostly concerned with male masculinity, a fact connected to ideological motivations: according to him, “[m]asculinity becomes legible as masculinity where and when it leaves the white male middle-class body” (2). Thus, female masculinity becomes not an imitation of maleness, but rather a tool for understanding how masculinity is actually constructed and performed. Even though a larger number of masculine women are present in contemporary society, Halberstam asserts that the level of recognition and acceptance of them as well as boyish girls is still low (ibid. 15).

⁶ For a more complete take on this issue, see Gardiner (2012).

Tomboys are presented by the author as an exemplary type of female masculinity: usually described as an “extended childhood period of female masculinity”, tomboyism is normally associated with “a 'natural' desire for the greater freedoms and mobilities enjoyed by boys” (ibid. 5-6). If it might be accepted during childhood, tomboyism is most certainly despised and punished if it extends into adolescence.⁷ As a matter of fact, “[i]f adolescence for boys represents a rite of passage [...] and an ascension to some version (however attenuated) of social power, for girls, adolescence is a lesson in restraint, punishment, and repression” (ibid. 6). Halberstam also talks about the so-called “bathroom problem”, meaning the failure for a number of women bathroom users in measuring up to femininity expectations (ibid. 20). The writer focuses on this specific instance because he believes it to illustrate the still strong presence of gender binarism in contemporary society. Various types of female masculinities contribute, according to Halberstam, to “a mounting cultural indifference to the masculinity of white males” (*Introduction* 372): reminding of Judith Butler's theories with regards to queer representations of what is “male” and “female,” Halberstam considers that drag kings, for instance, by recreating a theatrical masculinity, manage to point out its performative aspects (*Female* 30).

The importance of the concept of female masculinity lies in its capacity to improve contemporary studies which solely relate masculinity to the social, cultural, and political effects of male embodiment and privilege (Halberstam, *Good* 345). The author asserts that

it refuses the authentication of masculinity through maleness and maleness alone, and it

⁷ An interesting contemporary example might be provided by French director Céline Sciamma, who in her 2011 movie *Tomboy* represents the struggles of a 10-year-old girl who, during the summer in a new neighbourhood, has the chance to pretend to be a boy. Although eventually she will be punished and ashamed by her own mother, one of the main concerns of the protagonist throughout the movie is the approaching scholastic year, a symbol of hegemonic power and conformity, which would necessarily 'unmask' her.

names a deliberately counterfeit masculinity that undermines the currency of maleness; [...] it offers an alternative mode of masculinity that clearly detaches misogyny from maleness and social power from masculinity; [...] it offers one powerful model of what inauthentic masculinity can look like. (ibid.)

Introducing the contemporary writings by R.W. Connell on masculinity and those by Butler and Halberstam, it was possible to give a theoretical background, as introductory as it was, for the later literary analysis of the work by Ernest Hemingway, which will follow in the next chapter. Nevertheless, if this section presented contemporary instances related to masculinity in general, it is necessary now to turn to the formation and the features of the modern Western model of masculinity, which will be central later.

1.2. The Modern Western Model of Masculinity

Masculinity as a concept and as a reference for the construction of identities has been changing throughout the ages. For the development of this research, it is necessary to briefly look at the formation of the Western model between the 16th and 19th centuries and its modern features. Masculinity became a central ideal for the ruling bourgeoisie in Europe and in the United States. Despite its structuring a deeply-rooted set of roles, the model went through what has been sometimes called a crisis, but was rather a reformation and adaptation to the new social and political landscape of the *fin de siècle*, between the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century. The birth of the Women's Movement and the more significant presence of homosexuals, together with industrialisation and immigration, provided the normative masculine role and society in general with a series of issues to be dealt with. The following sections will offer an historical overview of the development of the model of masculinity as it formed in

Western society.

1.2.1. Origins of the Model

In the centuries following the end of the Middle Ages, European and later North American societies developed a series of new features which would configure various social practices, among which are to be found those forming what we consider “masculinity.” R.W. Connell indicates four developments in the newly born capitalist society, which had a role in the shaping of the model of masculinity. The first saw ideals of sexuality starting to change with the decline of religious control of everyday life:

on the one hand, [...] marital heterosexuality displaced monastic denial as the most honoured form of sexuality [...]. On the other hand, the new emphasis on individuality of expression and on each person's unmediated relationship with God led towards individualism and the concept of an autonomous self. (*Masculinities* 186)

The foundation and rise of overseas empires, for the major part staffed by men, and the growth of cities, core of the capitalist enterprise, were important developments of the modern Western world (ibid. 187). Finally, the religious and dynastic wars throughout the centuries, which Connell defines as the European civil war, led to the formation of “professional armies” that “became a key part of the modern state” (ibid. 189).

The listed features were indeed creating the bedrock for the formation of the model of masculinity, which nevertheless gained more distinct corporeal and substantial standards during the 18th century. Body and spirit became deeply connected: for this reason, masculinity was given a physical ideal that could represent the virtues and features of the hegemonic stereotype. The second half of the century witnessed the publication of some works, which were fundamental for the formation of the model as it

is known: on the one hand, Johann Kaspar Lavater's *Essays on Physiognomy*, published in 1781; on the other hand, *Reflections on the Painting and Sculpture of the Greeks* (1755) and *History of Ancient Art* (1764) by Johann Joachim Winckelmann (Mosse 25, 29). These texts indicated the positive balance between body and soul as the perfect state for human beings. Any physical feature that would not correspond to the ideal of Hellenic beauty outlined by Winckelmann was to be considered as the sign of a possible wickedness performed by men. Lavater developed Physiognomy, a subject that will later be limited to be considered as a pseudo-science. Nevertheless, it had a huge impact in the formation of the modern model of masculinity: its essential consideration was that “the more virtuous, the greater the beauty of any human being; the less virtuous, the uglier his appearance” (ibid. 25). The fundamental principle of the physiognomical analysis was that depravation or illness, especially sexual, left visible marks on an individual who “suffered” from them. The definition of counter types resulted to be much easier, as they would present flaws which somehow ruined the physical perfection scientifically analysed by Lavater: his studies were important for the stabilisation of the virile ideal, as he mostly valued “love of work, moderation and cleanliness” (ibid. 26), producers of sane and proportioned individuals.

The body was a fundamental element in the perception of modern masculinity. If Lavater created a theory of interior virtue, Winckelmann, archaeologist and art historian, helped to rediscover an aesthetic ideal: he suggested that Greek sculpture was the representation of ideal beauty to be taken as a model (ibid. 29). The male figures were finely proportioned, a perfection which according to the author reflected the intact morality of the subjects represented in the statues. One among the central features of the male stereotype in the modern era was without a doubt physical beauty, which somehow transmitted a deep sense of virility. The Greek revival shaped an appealing male ideal

which became part of the process of *Bildung*, namely the “middle-class urge to self education and character building [...] meant to create good citizens” (ibid. 36). A relevant and interesting fact with regards to Winckelmann is his homosexuality: as George Mosse highlights, “whatever the evolution of the male stereotype, a homoerotic sensibility stood at the start of an image that was to inform the ideal of normative masculinity such as the clean-cut Englishman or the all-American boy” (ibid. 32).

Another central feature of modern masculinity was its heterosexuality, an element deeply related to the bourgeois morality that had an enormous impact on pre-existing social structures. During the period that witnessed the development of the middle-class, a transfiguration of the system took place: among the structures of power and population control, probably the one which mostly dominated the daily lives of individuals was the private environment of the family. From the 19th century onwards, it was defined by a new normativity, most of the times restrictive, as Michael Foucault reminds us at the beginning of the first volume of his *History of Sexuality*:

Sexuality was carefully confined; it moved into the home. The conjugal family took custody of it and absorbed it into the serious function of reproduction. On the subject of sex, silence became the rule. The legitimate and procreative couple laid down the law. The couple imposed itself as a model, enforced the norm, safeguarded the truth, and reserved the right to speak while retaining the principle of secrecy. A single locus of sexuality was acknowledged in social space as well as at the heart of every household, but it was a utilitarian and fertile one: the parents' bedroom. (3)

In this passage the French philosopher explicitly indicates how only the heterosexual relationship was allowed and socially accepted and how it had to be directed towards reproduction, so that the maintenance of the species would be granted. So-called

“degenerate” sexualities, meaning unable to reproduce, were labelled repulsive and were categorically abhorred: “[anything] that was not ordered in terms of generation or transfigured by it [...] would be driven out, denied, and reduced to silence. Not only did it not exist, it had no right to exist and would be made to disappear upon its least manifestation – whether in acts or in words” (ibid. 4). Identities that were considered unsuitable for society were forcibly enclosed in spaces where it would be possible to circumscribe them, such as mental institutions and brothels, realities of isolation and restraint of outcast sexualities.

1.2.2. The Model in the United States

Even though the Western masculine ideal is pretty much defined by common and shared patterns, it is possible to point out a few features that are peculiar for specific countries: it is the case of the United States, which managed to develop certain distinctive traits even though their history had been constantly developing alongside the European. It might be helpful to focus on the situation of the U.S. considering that my research will later centre on Ernest Hemingway, one of the most important North American authors of the last century. The historian Michael Kimmel has asserted that the American social character has been defined in different centuries as violent, aggressive, extremely competitive, and gnawing insecure. He has also noticed how the aforementioned characteristics happen to be the “defining features of compulsive masculinity, a masculinity that must always prove itself and is always in doubt” (*History* 93). According to Kimmel, American masculinity is linked to the Western colonialist tradition not only by the subjugation of women, but also by the domination of other people and the appropriation of their land (ibid. 96). Furthermore, a central element in the construction of American masculinity is its definition in relation not only to women,

but also to other men, as a homosocial performance (Kimmel, *Manhood* 7), which, as defined in a previous section of this research, is a fundamental device for the maintenance of patriarchal power.

After the end of the American Revolution in 1783, the United States was free from colonial market dependence: this created an economic growth that lasted for a few decades. The two main consequences of this increase in the market were “westward expansion as well as dramatic urban growth” (ibid. 22). Until that moment the most prominent models of masculinity had been the Genteel Patriarch, defined by a dignified aristocratic manhood inherited from Europe, and the Heroic Artisan, an “honest toiler, unafraid of hard work, proud of his craftsmanship and self-reliance” (ibid. 16). With the rise of the middle-class, the end of European power and the economic boom, a different model started to form, which was to be known with the American neologism of Self-Made Men, defined by

success in the market, individual achievement, mobility, wealth. America expressed political autonomy; the Self-Made Men embodied economic autonomy. This was the manhood of the rising middle-class. The flip side of this economic autonomy is anxiety, restlessness, loneliness. Manhood is no longer fixed in land or small-scale property ownership or dutiful service. Success must be earned, manhood must be proved – and proved constantly. (ibid. 23)

Indeed, manhood had to be continuously proven: the ground on which it was to be demonstrated was the public sphere, where it could be compared and related to that of other men, thus underlining its nuclear homosocial element. The 19th century witnessed the rise in power of the Self-Made Man, striving to control and prosper. As in Europe, this period saw an increase of advice manuals that recommended the repression of

sexual drive and masturbation, especially for young men. Physical exercise became central for the constitution of bodies that could resemble the aforementioned model. The ideal of the nuclear, heterosexual family was made stronger by the peculiar social situation, as men and women were more than ever differentiated in separate spheres: the home and the children were a woman's occupation, whereas the workplace was the masculine space in which men could prove themselves to be bread-winners, yet another term originated in the US at the time (ibid. 59). If women's role was domestic, it was also of domesticators, "expected to turn their sons into virtuous Christian gentlemen – dutiful, well-mannered and feminized" (ibid. 60). Men repudiated this ostensible female power by running away from it: the "unexplored" territories thus became the ideal space for male freedom, unshackled from the social restrictions they left behind: "the West became a safety valve, siphoning off excess population, providing an outlet for both the ambitious and the unsuccessful" (ibid.). It meant not only liberty, but also, once again, homosociality, as nearly only men were able to access autonomy outside the conventions of society.

The Civil War between 1861 and 1865 represented the collision between two ideals of masculinity: the North embodied the Self-Made Man and the industrial businessman, whereas the South remained mostly connected to the older and conservative model of the Genteel Patriarch. Indeed, the defeat of the southern Confederacy can be also considered as a gendered humiliation, as their masculinity was discredited by a different model which they could not accept (ibid. 73-78). The Civil War also meant economic and industrial growth, as the conflict demanded technological developments: for this very reason, people previously working in the agricultural sectors were now inclined to approach industrial jobs, thus abandoning the countryside and moving to the growing cities. The expansion of urban spaces created a new element in American society: the

crowd. The already growing multitudes were enlarged by freed black slaves, liberated after the end of the Civil War, and immigrants, whose arrival was a consequence of the economic power gained by the United States after the end of the conflict.⁸ The political turmoil at the turn of the century, in the United States as well as in Europe, which experienced similar circumstances, provoked a profound social distress: “[t]he combined impact of these processes led many men to feel frightened, cut loose from the traditional moorings of their identities, adrift in some anomic sea. By the last decades of the century, manhood was widely perceived to be in crisis” (ibid. 78).

1.2.3. The Model in Crisis

The turn of the 19th century was a critical moment for Western societies: faced with enormous changes, the establishment had to adapt itself to new social and political perspectives, thus causing what has been considered as a crisis, but might rather be defined as an adjustment to the new historical situation. One of the main causes for the social instability of the West was the advent of women in the public sphere: the *fin de siècle* bore witness to the advent of the New Woman, “a single, highly educated, economically autonomous woman who challenged existing gender relations and the distribution of power” (Kimmel, *Contemporary* 142). In addition to that, the New Women were usually activists, involved in the creation of a strong feminist movement both in Europe and in the United States. The activists demanded economic and social equality between men and women, political participation through suffrage and the recognition of their autonomy as individuals:

on the whole they directed their energies into giving women a place in the public realm.

⁸ Kimmel indicates that “[a] total of nine million immigrants came to the United States between 1880 and 1900, and fourteen million more arrived by 1914” (*Manhood* 85).

[...] There were moderate and radical feminists, those who agitated for legal equality, those who agitated for suffrage, and those [who] demanded the vote, equal pay, equal education, and equal promotion and job prospects. (Mosse 102-103)

Male power and superiority were put into question by the feminist uprising, and men's reactions to the movement were not homogeneous. Focusing once again on the United States, according to the historian Michael Kimmel it is possible to define three different responses, namely antifeminist, masculinist, and profeminist (*Responses* 262).

The first ideology accused women altogether of the crisis that men were experiencing. The arguments used by antifeminists were for the most part based on the so-called natural order, according to which women held an inferior position: “[b]y linking social protest to biological confusion, antifeminist medical men could claim that the feminist struggle against socially constructed definitions of gender was really a war against nature” (ibid. 268). Society was considered to be feminized and weakened, and for this reason fighting women's social advance became somehow a patriotic act.

The masculinist ideology was less interested in women's power in the public sphere and more concerned with their power in the private one. If these men were not accusing women directly of being antagonists, they were troubled by “cultural changes that had reduced the importance and visibility of masculinity” (ibid. 269). Realities controlled by women would lead to the feminisation of young boys, thus inducing them towards homosexuality. In order to undermine the supposed relevance of women in the private realm, men created “distinctly male agencies of socialization” (ibid.): as a matter of fact, homosociality, one of the most important features of normative masculinity, was an imperative condition for the formation of heterosexual men.

Much more progressive, although much less influential, was the limited body of work by North American men who welcomed women's principles and fights. According

to pro-feminists, the oppression of women was a limiting condition for men as well: they “believed that women's political participation, symbolized by the extension of suffrage to women, would be a significant gain for all Americans” (ibid. 272). Feminism was seen as a challenge to the patriarchal social order which was damaging for men as well, whereas “[t]he liberation of women [...] from the oppressive bonds of traditional femininity implied the liberation of men from the restrictive moorings of traditional masculinity” (ibid. 276).⁹

Whatever the response to the feminist movements, they nevertheless had an enormous impact on the social landscape of the *fin de siècle*. That being said, it should be added that their political agenda did not deviate from the heterosexual model, as it rather attempted to reach equality between women and their male counterpart. A different, but similarly destabilising situation was the appearance of heterodox sexualities in the public social spaces.

An explicit attack to the hegemonic masculine stereotype of the *fin de siècle* was led by “‘unmanly’ men and ‘unwomanly’ women [who] were becoming ever more visible” (Mosse 78). Especially during the last decade of the century, homosexuals and lesbians strongly displayed their sexuality: this situation was considered utterly abnormal by the respectable bourgeois milieus, and it was harshly and clinically opposed. What “pederasts” represented was a challenge to the norms of modesty and decorum, and it was certainly considered to be an unpleasant reality to be adequately punished.¹⁰ Androgyny, or the tendency to blend together what were supposed to be male and female essences, was progressively opposed as an identity throughout the 19th century,

⁹ It is interesting to point out that one of the most important representatives for profeminist positions was Max Eastman, with whom Hemingway himself would later have a now infamous quarrel in 1937: when the critic accused the author of hiding behind false hair on his chest, Hemingway responded by actually showing his chest asking Eastman if he thought that his hair was in fact false: afterwards, he slapped the critic with the book that contained the article in question.

¹⁰ One of the most famous and mentioned examples of attack to homosexual love was the trial for “gross indecency with men” against the Irish author Oscar Wilde that took place in 1895, after which the accused spent two years in Reading Gaol.

because it represented the demolition of the separation of sexes, a necessary aspect for the conservation of the status quo. Lesbians were also considered to be degenerates: as a matter of fact, if society claimed that the perfect model for women was that of a passive mother constrained in the private sphere, lesbians were seen as representing a sterility that, together with that of male homosexuals, could have traumatic consequences for the existence of the human race.

Inconvenient identities, either heterosexual or homosexual, suffered from a strong repression at the hands of a great number of doctors who attempted to restore a model of masculinity that had been undergoing a destabilising process. Unacceptable identities were specifically defined so that it would be easier to identify and defeat them. Furthermore, the masculine model experienced a strong reform, which characterised it as even more homophobic, misogynous, hierarchical and racist (Bellassai, *Virilità* 42), with an emphasis on male homosocial spaces and male body.

1.2.4. Reforming the Model

When the Western middle-class was faced with a series of male identities that could not be included among respectable and accepted ideals of masculinity, a widespread medicalisation of the different cases started, accompanied by a widening of the clinical lexicon. The historian Angus McLaren tracks the complex evolution of discourses related to abnormal sexualities in his work *The Trials of Masculinity* (1997). The author takes into consideration the cases of degeneration related to heterosexual men, the so-called “weaklings” (ibid. 137). The fast developments of modernity were among the causes of a hysterical psychological tension that, even though usually connected to the female sex, was extended to men at the end of the 19th century. Many factors of stress,

among which we can find the mechanisation of work and the perceived loss of patriarchal power in the family, were considered to be related to genital deficiencies. The North American doctor George Beard “coined the term neurasthenia to refer to male sexual exhaustion” (ibid. 142) in order to define sexual ailments which were previously unknown, or rather unconceived. Once again, masturbation held the first place among those ailments, as it was taken to be the abuse at the base of each and every sexual perversion and nervous problems: the masturbator, because of his solitary vice, fulfilled a role opposite to the bourgeois values of self-control and moderation thus resulting to perform an anti-social act. In general, all the forms of onanism, that is any manner of dispersal of male semen, were linked to the enfeeblement of men's vital energy. Among the worst cases were the *coitus interruptus*, an “unnatural” form of intercourse, and the *coitus reservatus*, that is the sexual intercourse performed with a condom (ibid. 143-44). Freud himself claimed that all the forms of wasting semen necessary to the procreation and the conservation of the human species were libidinal tensions that led individuals to dangerous conditions of anguish (ibid. 143-46). Amid the social constructions related to perversion some were defined as sadistic, for example fetishism and exhibitionism, because if on the one hand they were connected to the aggressive core considered to be an essential part of the active male role, on the other hand they exceeded the limits established by morality, thus becoming symbols of sexual impotence. The case of exhibitionists is interesting, since they were mostly part of the middle-class but because of high levels of stress, domestic and working rhythms, were led to commit extremely unaccepted deeds. They were particularly dreaded because they put at risk not only the ideal of masculinity, but also the stereotype of the respectable bourgeois, thus the credibility of their social class (ibid. 206). For similar reasons, male transvestites were clinically defined: they represented the explicit

adoption of a role that was by nature opposed to their own, but without behaving as homosexuals, which would have been more easily conceived. Even within the heterosexual structure there were individuals who abandoned the norms and dangerously deviated from social expectations. Their flaws were mostly treated through therapies: nevertheless, if those resulted to be inefficient, people were shut in nursing homes or even mental institutions.

If medicalisation had a role in the reformation of masculinity as a response to what was considered as a crisis, it was not the only tool for the revitalisation of the male model. As a matter of fact, the creation of new forms of exclusive masculine sociality were central for the “purification” of manhood from feminisation, which was based on the institutionalisation of the exclusion of women from masculine social spaces (Bellassai, *Mascolinità* 65). If during the 19th century in the United States the frontier had represented freedom, now with the end of the conquest of the West men had lost one of their ideal escapes. Nevertheless, if that kind of male liberty could no longer be experienced, “it could be vicariously enjoyed by appropriating the symbols and props that signified earlier forms of power and excitement” (Kimmel, *Manhood* 118). The outdoors became the space for male independence, so much so that hunting witnessed its renaissance at the turn of the century, although modern processes of slaughtering made it no longer a mean of survival (ibid. 136). This attraction to the wild led to the creation of many boys organisations, among which the most famous must be the Scout Movement, formed in the early years of the new century by the British Army officer Robert Baden-Powell, then officially established in the United States in the year 1910 by Ernest Thompson Seton as the Boy Scouts of America (ibid. 169). Young boys' formation was seen as being in charge of women: the principal social institutions on which youth education was based – namely the house, the church and the school – were

in their hands (ibid. 158): in order to rescue the youth from a much feared feminisation, they were being reunited with wholesome virile ideals.

If these organisations gave young boys a space for becoming men, another important feature of the reformation of masculinity was the “sports craze” that America experienced at the end of the century:

sports were heralded as character-building; health reformers promised that athletic activity would make young men healthier and instill moral virtues. Sports were a central element in the fight against feminization; sports made boys into men [and] were necessary [...] to counteract the enervating tendency of the times. (Kimmel, *History* 54)

As already mentioned, manhood needed to be proved, and sports provided the perfect environment for this required proof.

Western masculinity at the turn of the 19th century witnessed what was then considered as a crisis: nevertheless, the ideal did not succumb to the historical circumstances, but rather managed to survive. Through various instruments of reinforcement and stabilisation of virility such as sports, heterosexual homosocial organisations and medical discourses, the hegemonic masculinity that had seemed to be slowly decaying was paradoxically hardened by the crisis and entered the new century triumphantly.

CHAPTER 2

2.1. Re-Reading Ernest Hemingway

After having introduced the formulations of Masculinity Studies in the previous section, in the present chapter I am going to apply those theoretical tools to the re-reading of a small segment of the works by Ernest Hemingway. A widely studied and canonical author of the Western canon, his production offers an extensive body of literature which provides fertile terrain for a critical analysis based on theories of Masculinity.

In this chapter, after presenting a quick, albeit necessary, overview of Hemingway's biography, I am going to approach a number of critics who throughout the last seventy years have been concerned with issues of gender and, partially, masculinity, thus shaping the understanding of the author up to this day. Criticism, especially since the mid-1980s, has been mostly divided between two sides which will be more thoroughly discussed in the third section of the chapter: essentially, the first disapproves of Hemingway's perceived misogyny, while the second attempts to re-read his written production and life "as marked by androgyny, homosexuality or sexual ambiguity" (Armengol, *Gendering* 82). Even though the element of machismo within his work has been often addressed, "the specific question of masculinity remains largely overlooked" (ibid.): nevertheless, a re-reading of the author's writings specifically based on theories of Masculinity has been growing in the last few decades, especially by virtue of the critical approach of Thomas Strychacz, who provided innovative analytical instruments. Finally, in the conclusive section of the chapter I will present my reading of some short stories by the author contained in the 1938 collection *The First Forty-Nine Stories*: by focusing on his short fiction rather than his novels, I deem that it is possible to take into account a more extensive assay of exemplary types of characters that often recur in the

writer's body of work and are usually less studied. What I would hope to demonstrate is that Hemingway's representation of masculinity in his writings is much more complex than is usually thought: as a matter of fact, even though criticism has often flatly considered his characters to be representatives of a hegemonic masculinity, after a close reading of the author's prose, the aforementioned consideration might be questioned. Indeed, the protagonists and secondary characters of the stories seldom achieve social expectations and are rather represented as failing in their attempts to reach an ideal model of masculinity which they are unable to fulfil.

2.2. A Chronology of Hemingway's Life

Ernest Hemingway's biography is essential for the understanding of his literary production: most of his writings deal with situations and experiences which the author himself lived throughout his life. Nevertheless, neither secondary characters nor the protagonists of Hemingway's production should be taken to be actual representations of real people. Most importantly, the various lead characters are not to be considered as precise autobiographical portrayals of the author himself, even though there has been a critical tendency to do so. For this reasons it can be useful to outline a brief chronology of the most important events that shaped not only Hemingway's literary endeavours but also his identity and his more public persona.¹¹

Born on July 21, 1899 in Oak Park, an upper-class suburb of Chicago, Ernest Miller Hemingway was the second of six children born from the marriage of Clarence Hemingway, a physician, and Grace Hall, a teacher. He was less than one year old when he spent his first summer in the family's residence on Lake Michigan, which would become his childhood's favourite destination. There he started to approach wild life and activities which he would never abandon throughout his whole life, such as fishing and

¹¹ For this section, I will make use of Wagner-Martin (2007), Kale (2013), and Raeburn (2013).

hunting: he was three when he caught his first fish, and he received his first shotgun in the summer of 1911 from his paternal grandfather. The summers spent in Michigan provided some escape from the conservative, protestant, bourgeois and white Oak Park, where parents imposed a strictly religious and patriarchal education to their children, and even physical and psychological punishments were often utilised by their father. In school, Ernest was a successful student, a mediocre football player, but outstanding in his contribution to the school paper and literary magazine: when he graduated in 1917, he was named Class Prophet, a tribute to his writing talent. During his teenage years, he also started to practice a number of sports, among them boxing, as at the time physical exercise was an essential feature for any respectable man's life: even Ernest's youth hero and role model Theodore Roosevelt, President of the United States between 1901 and 1909, was among the most passionate promoters of physical exercise for young men. At the end of high-school, Hemingway made a decision that later revealed itself to be fundamental in his life and career: he chose not to go to college in order to become a real journalist. For this very reason, he moved to Kansas City, Missouri, where in 1917, thanks to his paternal uncle's acquaintances, he got a job as a cub reporter for the *Kansas City Star*. Even though this experience lasted only a few months, from October 1917 to the spring of 1918, it taught the young Ernest the journalistic style of writing, based on short sentences, brief introductory paragraphs and the suppression of unnecessary words: these were clearly the principles that he would adhere to for his later written production.

Although this first job in journalism was as fundamental as exciting for the young man, it did not stop him from following his intention to enlist in the U.S. army in order to take part in the conflict that had been tormenting Europe since 1914. His bad eyesight ruled out his possibility to join the regular army: nevertheless, he chose to volunteer

with the Red Cross as an ambulance driver, and he left for Italy at the end of May 1918. His military service though lasted just over a month, as on July 8, near Fossalta di Piave, he was struck by the shrapnel of an Austrian mortar and by the fire of a machine-gun: 227 metal fragments, together with two bullets, were removed from his legs. He was reportedly the first American soldier to survive after being wounded in Italy. Hemingway was awarded two Italian medals, the *Croce di guerra* and *Medaglia d'argento al valore*, and returned to the United States acclaimed as a national hero. During his recovery in a military hospital in Milan, he fell in love with the American nurse Agnes von Kurowsky. When he left Europe, he was convinced that she would later join and marry him: nevertheless, once Hemingway arrived home their relationship ended, as Agnes wrote him that she was engaged to an Italian officer. Even though he was deeply distressed by the events, their relationship would later inspire him in the process of writing his 1929 successful novel *A Farewell to Arms*.

Back in the United States, Hemingway went through a period of stress and anxiety caused by shell-shock. During the three years that he spent in his native country, he moved between Oak Park, Chicago, Lake Michigan and Toronto, where he had got a job as freelancer. In September 1921, he married the first of four wives, Hadley Richardson. Two months after their marriage, the couple moved to Paris, as it was suggested by the American writer Sherwood Anderson, met a few months earlier. The author provided Hemingway with important letters of introduction to Gertrude Stein, Sylvia Beach and Ezra Pound, whom Ernest and Hadley started to visit once arrived in the French capital. In Paris, Hemingway went on being a reporter for the *Toronto Star*, and even followed the Greco-Turkish war in Constantinople and later went to Lausanne for the peace conference. He also started to focus more on his literary career: he produced various pieces of writing following the suggestions by Stein and Pound, who helped him to

shape his style, introducing the young man to the principles of Modernism and Imagism. A fundamental and traumatic event in Hemingway's profession took place in December 1922, when the suitcase in which Hadley had put all of Ernest's writings was stolen on the train she took to join her husband in Switzerland. Everything he had written but two short stories was lost, leaving a void in his production and negative consequences on their marriage. The following year was defined by a series of important events: in May, Ernest witnessed his first bullfight in Madrid. Extremely fascinated and inspired by it, in July he attended the Festival of San Fermín in Pamplona. Later that year, he and Hadley left Europe for Toronto in order to await the birth of their first child. Once they returned to Paris, Hemingway fully committed to his literary career: his first important collection of short stories, *In Our Time*, was published in 1925. Between that year and 1929, Hemingway became a widely renowned writer: his first novel, *The Sun Also Rises*, was distributed in 1926 and gained a wide critical acclaim. Twelve months later his second collection of short stories *Men Without Women* was printed and less than a year from then the already mentioned novel *A Farewell to Arms* became a best seller. In the meantime, the Hemingways were going through a crisis that ended with their divorce and Ernest's second marriage to the *Vogue* writer Pauline Pfeiffer in 1927, with whom he moved to Key West, Florida. A few months after his son's return to the United States, Clarence Hemingway committed suicide, adding to the traumatic experiences of the young author's existence.

During the early 1930s, Hemingway developed his public image by mostly writing non-fiction, published both as articles in magazines such as *Esquire*, and in printed form, for instance *Death in the Afternoon* and *Green Hills of Africa*. In these works, he introduced to the public his persona, characterised by toughness, virility and a love of sports such as bullfighting, deep-sea fishing, taken up after the relocation in Florida, and

big-game hunting, which he practiced in a two-month African safari in 1933. Nevertheless, this period witnessed a downfall in his critical appreciation, as most of his writing was taken to be an effort to produce a personal myth, based on hypermasculinity and individualism, making it something of a parody of his earlier masterpieces.

The beginning of the Spanish Civil War in 1936 provided Hemingway with a potential occasion for a fresh start, as the North American Newspaper Alliance asked him to be a reporter. The war supplied the inspiration for two works, namely Hemingway's only play *The Fifth Column*, which ended up being a critical failure, and the widely successful novel *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. During his activity in Spain, Ernest started an affair with the journalist Martha Gellhorn, with whom he eventually married in 1940 and moved to the farmhouse La Finca Vigía in Havana, Cuba, after his divorce with Pauline was finalised.

With the entry of United States into World War II in 1940, Hemingway at first organised a counterintelligence group, supported by the American embassy in Cuba and formed in order to eliminate possible Nazi spies in the Caribbean country; he later proposed to transform his boat *Pilar* into a Q-Boat, employed to hunt German submarines, none of which were actually encountered by the boat's crew. Ernest later accepted a job as a front-line correspondent, leaving for Europe in 1944. In London he met Mary Welsh Monks, who would later become his last wife. Against the regulations of journalistic conduct, he commanded irregular troops in the liberation of Paris, risking to be court-martialed, while in fact he was awarded the Bronze Star. The end of the war coincided with the end of Ernest and Martha's marriage, as they divorced in December of 1945.

After the conclusion of the global conflict, Hemingway started to work on “the Land, Sea, and Air Book” which he would never in fact complete, but parts of it would

be published as standalone novels: the first was *Across the River and Into the Trees*, met with mostly negative reviews in 1950. Nevertheless, after two years the novella that might be considered his masterpiece was published in the magazine *Life* in more than 5 million copies: thanks to *The Old Man and the Sea*, Hemingway won the 1952 Pulitzer Prize for distinguished American fiction. Ernest and Mary spent six months on an African safari between 1953 and 1954: in January, they were involved in two plane crashes in only two days. After the first accident, newspapers around the world spread the news of the author's death; nevertheless, it was the second crash that left him with serious injuries to his head, shoulder, back, liver, intestines, and kidneys from which he would never fully recover. The same year, he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature but could not attend to the ceremony due to his injuries. The last years of Hemingway's life were defined by paranoia and depression: in the Autumn of 1960, he checked into a clinic for electroshock treatments, but his condition kept worsening. After two failed attempts to end his life, Hemingway shot himself on July 2, 1961.

The death of the author did not stop the publication of his work: in fact, a number of novels and non-fiction were published posthumously, for instance *A Moveable Feast*, an account of Hemingway's years in Paris, and *The Garden of Eden*, a novel published in 1986 which became a turning point for the analysis of his work. The next section of this chapter will provide a general overview of the most important critical tendencies that shaped the academic world concerned with the analysis of the American author, as well as his public image, which went through several different and somehow opposite stages.

2.3. Hemingway, Masculinity and the Critics

As one of the most important authors within the literary canon, Ernest Hemingway and

his work have been widely studied. The author's academic consideration experienced three main phases, starting during his lifetime in the 1950s, with scholars such as Carlos Baker and in particular Philip Young, who somehow set the critical standard which became the bedrock for following studies. With the rise of Feminism and Feminist Criticism in the 1970s, Hemingway and his work went through a critical downfall: as a matter of fact, the movement and the academic landscape related to it strongly criticised the author, as they considered him to be the representation of anything patriarchy could be. He was accused of being misogynist, sexist, racist and violent, the perfect depiction of that hegemonic masculinity against which Feminism rightly fought. The third phase of criticism started in the year 1986, after the posthumous novel *The Garden of Eden* was published: classic Hemingway themes of death, loss and courage were “overshadowed by the author's deliberate treatment of androgyny, bisexuality, and homosexuality, making it no longer possible to dismiss the latter as outliers in the Hemingway canon” (Moddelmog and del Gizzo 102). From the moment of the publication, a series of studies were produced, which distanced themselves both from the earlier and Feminist criticisms: the author and his work underwent a revision which introduced innovative and more advanced readings of Hemingway's production, problematising issues such as trauma, race and, most importantly for this research, masculinity. Contemporary criticism made possible a less simplistic reading of an author whose works certainly deserve a complex analysis.

The year 1952 witnessed the publication of two of the most influential books of criticism written about Hemingway: Philip Young's *Ernest Hemingway* and Carlos Baker's *Hemingway: the Writer as Artist*, in which the scholars presented two clashing approaches to the author, indeed starting from very different critical stances. In the work that was his doctoral dissertation, Young tried to unify the meaning of Hemingway's

work by indicating his traumatic World War I experience as the inspiration for his production: “he found the key to understanding Hemingway's fiction in his life experience – specifically, the wound he received” (Mazzeno 56). The scholar coined two central concepts related to the author's work, namely those of the Hero and of the Code. According to Young, the Code of 'grace under pressure' is an extremely important theme to be found throughout Hemingway's writings:

It is made of the controls of honor and courage which in a life of tension and pain make a man a man and distinguish him from the people who follow random impulses, let down their hair, and are generally messy, perhaps cowardly, and without inviolable rules for how to live and holding tight. (63)

The scholar then distinguishes two types of Hero: on the one hand, the “Hemingway hero”, who is characterised as an outdoor man, tough and virile, but is also wounded, physically or psychologically, and sometimes both. The main example of this character is Nick Adams, protagonist of a number of short stories, often considered as the author's alter-ego. On the other hand, the “Code hero” personifies the Code which Young considers to be central in the formation of 'true men': usually, this character is to be found among the various sporting figures who are employed by the author in order to represent the operating code (ibid. 64). It is easy to relate this Code hero to the later formulations of hegemonic masculinity presented in the first chapter of this research. Even though the “Hemingway hero” is found struggling to live by the code, he “frequently fails and suffers for his failures” (Mazzeno 57).

A more established scholar than Young, Carlos Baker developed a different analysis, as he wanted to resist the critical tendency to consider all the author's production autobiographically. In his introduction, Baker stated that he would not

illustrate “the history of [Hemingway's] private battles or his public wars” but would rather analyse the “substructure of symbolic meanings which has gone unrecorded, and for the most part unobserved, by a majority of those who have written about Hemingway” (xiii-xiv). Even though the two authors produced works that would be later criticised, they nevertheless started an important tradition of academic criticism oriented towards the analysis of Hemingway's work, and are still relevant references for any attempt to examine the production by the author.

Feminism, both as the political movement and as an academic field of studies, was groundbreaking: indeed, it also affected the critical analysis of Hemingway's written production, which experienced an important transformation at the end of the 1970s. As a man and as an author, Hemingway put on a façade of strong and violent masculinity, focused on activities considered to be manly such as hunting, boxing, and fighting. All in all, to feminists he had been the living representation of the patriarchal power, and had reproduced it through his written work. In a central text of literary criticism within the second wave of Feminism, namely Judith Fetterley's *The Resisting Reader*, the whole second chapter is devoted to the analysis of the novel *A Farewell to Arms*.¹² According to the scholar, Catherine's death did not represent the tragic end to an idealised romantic love story, but rather the hidden hatred that Hemingway felt towards the female sex:

[i]f we explore the attitude toward women in *A Farewell to Arms*, we will discover that while the novel's surface investment is in idealization, behind that idealization is a hostility whose full measure can be taken from the fact that Catherine dies and dies because she is a woman. (49)

¹² The book, set in Italy during World War I, follows the relationship of the American Lieutenant Frederic Henry and the English nurse Catherine Barkley: she gets pregnant and together they decide to escape to Switzerland, where they will be free to start a new life. The novel ends with the birth of a stillborn baby and Catherine's death by hemorrhage, after which Frederic is destroyed and alone.

Misogyny and sexism were considered to be a central feature of Hemingway's production: according to feminist scholars, it would be relevant to take them into consideration in the analysis of the author's writings. Even in later years, more or less justified preconceptions were still hanging over his work. In 1987, Lawrence Buell wrote an essay focused on the formation of the literary canon, an essential discussion of Gender literary studies. If on the one hand he rightly claimed that the canon should be expanded, in order to include more female authors, on the other hand he also called for the reordering of the "prefeminist canon," suggesting as an example "the demotion of Hemingway" (114).

The criticism born from the feminist fight was a necessary breaking point with the previous consideration of the author. Nevertheless, it was excessively radical in many of its claims: indeed even proposing to relegate Hemingway to a secondary position in the literary canon seems far-fetched to say the least, considering the overall importance of his production. What the author deserved was rather a discussion within and outside the academia which, avoiding preconceptions as well as justifications, could explore and present the complexity of one of the best prose writers of the century. This innovative reflection would see the light towards the end of the 1980s, after the publication of the posthumous novel *The Garden of Eden*, whose protagonists are the "writer David Bourne and his wife Catherine, who experiment with bisexuality, indulge in serious tanning, favor look-alike haircuts and bleach jobs, and set up a *ménage à trois* with bisexual Marita" (Kimmel and Aronson 379). Even though the novel was strongly edited and abridged in the process of publication, it nevertheless proved Hemingway's interest towards themes and topics related to gender, a fact which was mostly ignored during the previous decades of criticism. Another central piece for the ensuing debate

was the immense biography of the author by Kenneth S. Lynne, published the same year. In the psychoanalytic review of Hemingway's life, Lynne asserts that since the early childhood years the author was troubled by anxieties related to gender: as a matter of fact, Grace Hall, Ernest's mother, started "to dress and raise [her] second child as though he and his 1½-year-old sister Marcelline were twins of the same sex" (37). The biographer's claim was that Hemingway's subsequent behaviours and actions, defined by excessive masculinity, were a consequence of the traumas caused by his mother (Kennedy 192). Whether one fully accepts this analysis or not, it certainly demonstrates the importance that gender and sexuality started to have during the last thirty years of criticism concerned with Hemingway and his literary production.

Even though the interest of most scholars working within Gender Studies has been focused especially on issues such as androgyny or the female characters within the author's body of work, an increased concern with Hemingway's treatment and representation of masculinity has been growing in the academic community: the most important studies connected to the discussion, and thus to this research, are those by the British scholar Thomas Strychacz. He has been analysing the representation and dramatisation of manhood in Hemingway for the last thirty years, providing a brand new approach to Hemingway's production by studying the importance of gender performance following theories by Judith Butler and those supplied by Masculinity Studies. As previously exposed, early studies on the writer emphasised the features of virility and manliness, expressed through a behavioural model represented by Code heroes who populated Hemingway's production. These characteristics of strong hegemonic manhood ended up defining not only the author, but also his work. Nevertheless, Strychacz claims that early considerations tended not to see the problematic representation that Hemingway made of masculinity. In fact, the critique

was shaped by their personal concerns rather than Hemingway's: he asserts that "Hemingway criticism maps the profound anxieties experienced by male intellectuals as they accommodated to shifting constructions of masculinity amid a new project of symbolic capital" (*Dangerous* 11). Moreover, the British scholar deems inappropriate to consider the male characters in the works by the author as a direct representation of Hemingway himself. As a matter of fact, although Hemingway might have wanted to present himself as a tough man, solid about his manhood, according to Strychacz this is not the case as is clear from his use of audiences throughout his novels, short stories and non-fiction (*Theaters* 5). Hegemonic masculinity, as seen in the theoretical section of this research, is a fluid social construction, constantly changeable and challengeable: it is characterised by behaviours and gestures which are likely to collapse if not shared and accepted by the surrounding social environment. Strychacz suggests that many spaces used by Hemingway in his work can be considered as ceremonial arenas, in which the audience might appreciate or not the performance given: "[a]rising out of an audience's empowering acts of watching, a protagonist's sense of self rests precariously upon the audience's decision to validate or reject his ritual gestures towards manhood" (*Dramatization* 247). If early critics of Hemingway considered his protagonists to be strong and autonomous male heroes, the British scholar has been providing a fresh rereading of texts which challenged their assumptions. Furthermore, an issue with which the critic is concerned is the tendency to interpret the omissions which are a central feature of Hemingway's concise narrative style. Although a common act of literary analysis, the author's work has often been subject to the imposition of readings which are difficult to get rid of. As already said, formulations such as those by Philip Young of the Code and the Hero became the key to read into Hemingway's writings, the primal and seemingly indispensable foundation of any subsequent analysis. Strychacz

claims that those readings are not, and cannot be taken as, self-evident (*Theaters* 16). According to him, the author created male protagonists and secondary characters who instead of being personifications of hegemonic masculinity, silently and gracefully enduring constant pain, were physically and psychologically wounded, traumatised by the constant existential adversities encountered in their lives. The scholar deems that:

what used to look like stories of men heroically modelling grace under pressure has come to seem much more complex, troubled and troubling. In [Hemingway's] work the idea of a “man's man” becomes something of a challenge: what does it mean to be a man, let alone the perfect model of one? (*Masculinity* 277)

It was demonstrated that literary criticism concerned with the analysis of Hemingway's writings was renovated by Strychacz, who provided an innovative and provocative point of view: researchers were seldom concerned with the theoretical formulations produced by Masculinity Studies, whereas they were in fact the starting point for the British scholar's analysis. From these fundamental premises, it is possible to develop my own thesis as presented in the next part of the research.

2.4. *The First Forty-Nine Stories*

In the previous section I presented a brief historical introduction to the most important analytical stances related to the treatment of masculinity in Hemingway's production. Although it is undeniable that manhood had a central role in the author's writings and in their subsequent critical considerations, only in the last few decades a more complex revision has started. In my analysis, I wish to make use of the concepts and formulations that Masculinity Studies have provided, most considerably in their third wave of theorisation. I deem interesting to focus not only on characters who might be considered

as representing a hegemonic masculinity, but also secondary figures who nevertheless help creating a wider spectrum of masculinities, often overlooked by critics. Thomas Strychacz, as previously demonstrated, deconstructed the idea that Hemingway's representation of masculinity is one-sided and not articulated by presenting several instances in which his male characters are in need of an audience in order to demonstrate their acquired masculine traits and codes of behaviour. Following from his re-reading, my analysis will mostly focus on the constant failure to achieve a socially expected masculinity which many characters are faced with. Even though it is true that Hemingway, like his contemporaries, was conscious of the presence of a model of manhood which men were expected to achieve, he seldom wrote about men who could actually reach it. Most of his production acknowledges the common ideals of Western masculinity but rather than having his characters fulfilling that role, he leads them to constantly and unavoidably fail. If a model did in fact exist, it could not be realistically achieved.

Even though the theoretical perspective that I am going to apply to Hemingway's texts is only in part original, I believe that it has mostly been utilised for the study of the author's novels. For this very reason, I chose to focus on Hemingway's shorter fiction, in particular on his 1938 collection *The First Forty-Nine Stories*.¹³ the book assembles three previously published collections, namely *In Our Time* (1925), *Men Without Women* (1927), *Winner Take Nothing* (1933), and four later stories written around the year 1936. Interestingly, the story "Up in Michigan" is included, which together with "My Old Man" (inserted in the first collection of short stories) represents the only piece of Hemingway's early production, lost in 1922 on a train by his first wife Hadley Richardson. Taking into consideration a body of work which covers at least fifteen years

¹³ For my thesis I will make use of the following edition: Ernest Hemingway, *The First Forty-Nine Stories*, Arrow Books, London, 2004. Page numbers will be indicated in the text within brackets.

of the author's life makes it possible to investigate different periods of the writer's production, rather than focusing on a specific interval of his existence. Also, I have decided to avoid posthumous works such as *The Garden of Eden*: as a matter of fact, in order to make them available to the public, the writings had to be heavily edited and the results were certainly different from the author's intentions.

Choosing to work on the short stories means not only to explore a relatively less contemplated section of Hemingway's work; it also provides a larger and more varied sample of types on which to build my analysis. Most of the protagonists of the author's writings are present in these stories: indeed, readers are confronted with tales populated by big-game hunters, soldiers, fishermen, boxers, and bullfighters to name the most important ones. Many short stories also supply a series of female characters, people from diverse ethnic groups, such as Native American, African American and African, as well as subjects presenting heterodox sexualities: they appear as subordinate and marginalised masculinities, to follow Connell's definitions, and can certainly be helpful in the construction of a more complex consideration on Hemingway's representation of masculinity.

With the examination of some short stories, I wish to acknowledge and operate in the fairly new scholarly tradition that has been attempting to revitalise and problematise one fundamental author of the Western canon: I believe that the last three decades witnessed the development of a complex set of theoretical tools and viewpoints which can definitely conform to a more original examination of the North American author.

2.4.1. "The Battler"

Nick Adams is an essential character in Hemingway's work: he is the protagonist of a series of sketches and short stories which are scattered in the various collections listed

above.¹⁴ Philip Young devoted the first chapter of his study to him, acknowledging the importance of Adams in the author's production (29-55). He is mostly represented in his childhood and early adulthood, as readers witness his growth and development through a series of episodes of his life, which closely resemble Hemingway's. Adams tends to be depicted as the careful observer of the events with which he is faced throughout the years: he is in the process of learning and it is interesting to follow him in the formative situations which he encounters. The short story "The Battler" presents one of these episodes, which proves itself to be useful for my own research.

The scene opens on a wounded Nick, who has just been thrown out of a moving freight train on which he was illegally travelling. He has several injuries on his body, among which a black eye, gotten from the brakeman who surprised him. The young boy is on his own for the first time (Young 36) and has started on a solitary journey in Michigan, the state where Hemingway happily spent his early summers. The environment in which the action is set is interesting, as Nick is left in a desolate swampland in the middle of nowhere, almost representing the solitude and helplessness of the character introduced shortly after. Walking along the railroad the boy sees a fire below an embankment and decides to carefully approach it. Sitting at the fire there is a man, whose first words when greeted by Nick are "Where did you get the shiner?" (122): the reference to the black eye is not accidental, as we will later discover that the man is Ad Francis, a former boxing champion, now fallen in disgrace, who defines himself as crazy. The first conversation between the two contains a slight detail, namely Nick's refusal to consider himself as tough, which is revealing. Adams tells the man that the brakeman from the train punched him, and Francis suggests that he should "Get him with a rock some time when he's going through" (123): an excessively violent

¹⁴ In March 1972 all the 24 pieces of writing related to the character were collected in the posthumous book *The Nick Adams Stories*.

suggestion which is followed by the brief exchange:

'You're a tough one, aren't you?'

'No,' Nick answered.

'All kids are tough.'

'You got to be tough,' Nick said.

'That's what I said.' (ibid.)

The man does not even seem to notice the fact that Nick does not consider himself as a tough boy, although he acknowledges the existence of expectations with regards to strength and courage for men. Commenting this quick passage, Strychacz asserts that “the story reveals the inadequacy or even inappropriateness of masculine codes of conduct” (*Theaters* 62) by subtly stressing how the socially constructed image of masculinity does not in fact resemble actual behavioural patterns: this certainly reminds of Connell's considerations with regards to the ideal of hegemonic masculinity and its inability to represent the reality of people's lives.

During their conversation, a third man appears: he is Bugs, the only name he is given, a homeless African American who met Francis in jail and lives with him on the road. He is defined by very gentle and reasonable manners, and takes care of his mentally unstable friend. The connection between Ad Francis and Bugs has been read in different ways: Young made some disturbingly homophobic remarks by declaring that “[t]he tender, motherly, male-nursing Bugs is too comfortable in the relationship with the little, demented ex-fighter” (39), implying that they are in a homosexual affair. Holcomb gives a rather different interpretation of the couple, stating that “one may see 'The Battler' as staging the twentieth century's historic war against the inequitable, inherited master-slave relationship” (312). Even though the author never specifies the

nature of their relationship, it is an example of a situation which bears more complex meanings underneath a coverage of apparent simplicity. Francis and Bugs' survival is granted by a sum of money which Francis' ex-wife occasionally sends him, which might also be the reason why Bugs remains with him. In fact, he tells Nick:

'I like to be with him and I like seeing the country and I don't have to commit no larceny to do it. I like living like a gentleman.'

'What do you all do?' Nick asked.

'Oh, nothing. Just move around. He's got money.' (129)

The short story ends shortly after Nick's acquaintance with the two men: during an austere dinner with ham and eggs, Francis is suddenly offended by Bugs' refusal to allow Nick to hand him a knife. The ex-prizefighter suddenly loses his temper, aggressively addressing the young man thus: “Who the hell do you think you are? You're a snotty bastard. You come in here when nobody asks you and eat a man's food and when he asks to borrow a knife you get snotty” (126). Bugs stops Francis from assaulting Nick by hitting the back of his head with a cloth-wrapped blackjack which causes him to faint. He apologetically explains to Adams the reasons of his friend's mental instability: first of all, his career as a boxer “made him simple” as “he took too many beatings” (128); also, his marriage to a woman who resembled him caused a scandal, even though “they wasn't brother and sister no more than a rabbit” (ibid.) and led to their divorce. Strychacz deems that Francis “more than anyone else in the Nick Adams stories, has been battered in the public eye: first in the ring [...] and then in the papers” (*Theaters* 61). After telling him Ad's story, Bugs suggests Nick to leave, and the shocked boy walks away from the fire.

Introducing this short story, Young claimed that the tale's “unpleasantness is more

in the undertones and in things not said than in the outer events” (36): even though on the one hand he was actually referring to the possible homosexual relationship between Ad and Bugs, on the other hand he rightly acknowledged that things not said are central for the understanding of the brief piece of writing. It is necessary to underline the fact that Ad Francis used to be a boxing champion, and is now a lost and failed one. Boxing as a physical activity was essential in the sports craze at the passage between 19th and 20th century. Kimmel explains that at the time it experienced an incredibly larger participation and public exposure, as it “was defended as a counter to the 'mere womanishness' of modern, overcivilized society” (*History* 56). All in all, boxers were the living icons of a revitalised violent manhood, certainly considered to be among the representatives of the ideal masculinity that was socially recommended. Hemingway decided not to portray the sportsman at the height of his career, but rather when every part of his life had collapsed under the weight of his role and of his public humiliation. His profession, thus his position as an ideal of manhood, rendered him mentally ill, condemned to lose his family and his honour. Indeed, he finds himself dependent on a limited amount of money granted by the woman he had been married to, and on a man who is in fact using him for his own benefit. The initial description of the character presents a rough portrayal which might be read as the symbolic depiction of failure. From Nick's point of view, readers learn that:

[H]is face was misshapen. His nose was sunken, his eyes were slits, he had queer-shaped lips. Nick did not perceive all this at once, he only saw the man's face was queerly formed and mutilated. It was like putty in colour. Dead looking in the firelight. [...] He had only one ear. It was thickened and tight against the side of his head. Where the other ear should have been there was a stump. (123)

Francis is a grotesque figure who shocks the protagonist and is certainly very far from the strong, undefeatable champion that the readers, especially of the time, expected. Even though he appears to be ready to fight Nick at the climax of the story, his “attempt at self-dramatization merely parodies his earlier ability to dominate arenas as he falls unconscious in the most dishonorable way possible – being hit from behind” (Strychacz, *Theaters* 61). Even though criticism often tended to read characters such as Francis as “archetypally beaten but undaunted Hemingway hero[es]” (ibid.), I would rather consider him to be a defeated man, wasted by the unavoidable consequences of the violent and virile model of masculinity personified by himself.

The character of the failed boxer is not only found in “The Battler”: at least other two short stories from Hemingway's book include similar figures, namely “The Killers” and “Fifty Grand,” both initially published in the 1927 collection *Men Without Women*. Without delving too deep into the two short stories, it is interesting to point out how the boxer type in both of them is not portrayed as undefeated by the author. “The Killers” is possibly one of better known short stories by the author, and it was even adapted for the big screen in 1946, “reputedly one of the only adaptations of his work that Hemingway appreciated” (Jividen 83).¹⁵ It depicts a Swede, Ole Anderson, who used to be a heavyweight prize-fighter, endangered by two killers who are hired to “[kill] him for a friend” (268): once again, Nick Adams is the protagonist of the story, and when he is told about the assassins' plan, he runs to Anderson's dwelling to inform him. A brief exchange between the two makes clear that the ex-fighter has no intention whatsoever to stop his murder from happening:

Nick went on. 'They were going to shoot you when you came in to supper.'

Ole Anderson looked at the wall and did not say anything.

¹⁵ Robert Siodmack. *The Killers*. Directed by Robert Siodmack, Performances by Burt Lancaster and Ava Gardner, Universal, 1946.

'George thought I better come and tell you about it.'

'There isn't anything I can do about it,' Ole Anderson said. (271)

Anderson appears to have accepted his death: the reason why he is the target of the killers is not clear, probably he “[d]ouble-crossed somebody” (273), as Nick guesses. What is interesting for this research is that a man who has embodied in his life a model of strength and virility has gotten to the point of accepting to face mortal danger and refuses to fight for his life. It is certainly a different image compared to what fighters are usually imagined to be. Once again, Hemingway represents a boxer as a loser, a character who seems to be overwhelmed by guilt and failure, and is even ready to passively meet his end. In a similar manner, in the short story “Fifty Grand” Hemingway writes about the only boxer in his collection who does in fact fight. Nevertheless, the match that takes place is rigged, as the protagonist Jack Brennan accepts to be defeated for money: indeed, he bets fifty thousand dollars on his opponent, telling a friend “How can I beat him? Why not make money on it?” (295). At the end, he loses the fight, even though he had the means to win.

Boxing was an important part of Hemingway's life: in fact, he practiced the sport himself and he also enjoyed the spectacle as a member of the audience. Nevertheless, when it came to represent boxers in his written work, they did not appear as unbeatable and strong characters. They actually seem to have lost confidence in themselves, or rather in the ideal which they had become in the eyes of society. The three examples provided present a similar pattern in Hemingway's development of a typically masculine figure that appears in his writing as deeply distressed and unable to overcome his failure.

2.4.2. “The Capital of the World”

Several pastimes are usually connected to Hemingway's public image, among which boxing, as shown in the previous section, fishing and hunting: these were common diversions for the author that he kept practicing throughout his life. Nevertheless, there was one activity which he somehow venerated, and that was the Spanish *corrida de toros*, commonly known in English as bullfight. Since his first visit to the Iberian country in 1923, Hemingway started developing a profound appreciation for the ancient spectacle: indeed, he decided to write the 1932 non-fiction book *Death in the Afternoon*, in which he explored the origins and the art of the *corrida*, and its publication “transformed him in *the* bullfighting eminence in the English-speaking world – a position he still holds” (Mandel 227). His passion was so strong that when his first son was born, only a few months after witnessing his first bullfight, Ernest decided to name him “John Hadley Nicanor Hemingway, the Nicanor after the great *torero* (bullfighter), Nicanor Villalta” (Josephs 223). The author was greatly inspired by the event, so much so that he participated in many following seasons throughout the years. Obviously, his literary production was deeply influenced by bullfighting, indeed he wrote about it on several occasions and “in a variety of genres: experimental pieces of fiction [...], short and long poems, six short stories, several journalistic pieces, two novels, and, of course, the book-length nonfiction” (Mandel 232). His 1926 breakthrough novel *The Sun also Rises* takes place mostly during the now famous festival of San Fermín in Pamplona, distinguished by the running of the bulls and several bullfights, and the success of the novel somehow introduced the event to the English-speaking world. In order to discuss the aspects of the bullfight related to masculinity and Hemingway's consideration of it, I chose to work on “The Capital of the World”, one of the latest stories in the collection, published for the first time in 1936. Nevertheless, before starting to present the analysis

of the piece, it might be necessary to briefly underline some elements of the bullfight which attracted Hemingway, and his own considerations about the practice.

In its core, the *corrida* celebrates “the fertility of the earth and of humanity” (Sanderson 179), a fundamental concern of the Modernist movement at the beginning of the 20th century. It is a theatrical performance which does not include a mere fictitious representation of death, but rather stages a real sacrifice, reminding of ancient pagan fertility rites (ibid.). In the wasteland of modernity, Hemingway found an authentic practice, a ceremonial and tragic ritual which not only “brought him tremendous emotional and intellectual pleasure [that] fuel[ed] much of his fine prose” (Mandel 232), but that he also considered as the ultimate stage for demonstrating a brave and strong masculinity. As a matter of fact, to the author the priest-like figure of the bullfighter became the archetype of virility: “being a matador metonymically implies being a man [...], the man with the code, whom the hero studies, admires and emulates” (Strychacz, *Dangerous* 56). Among the diverse figures of masculinity that Hemingway utilised in his work, the bullfighter was the purest ideal of authentic manhood.

However, the author's written approach to the subject appears to be much more complex than a simplistic representation of a flawless model of masculinity: indeed, his work displays a harsh reality of violence, failure and death rather than an ideal of purity and courage. Furthermore, the bullring is a questionable space for masculine display: *toreros* are only allowed to perform in “an artificially controlled environment that grants [their] actions their symbolic import” and can show their virility “only by adhering to codes that elsewhere are shattered and thus unavailable to other men” (Strychacz, *Time* 80). The short story “The Capital of the Word” provides an interesting example of the above mentioned aspects of Hemingway's representation of bullfighting, presenting primary and secondary characters whose presence and actions problematise the author's

approach to the ritual.

The story opens by introducing the young protagonist Paco, a waiter at the Pension Luarca in Madrid: the first few lines contain a key passage which suggests how the tale about to be revealed might actually be relevant and applicable to a larger number of people. The narrator begins thus:

Madrid is full of boys named Paco, which is the diminutive of the name Francisco, and there is a Madrid joke about a father who came to Madrid and inserted an advertisement in the personal columns of *El Liberal* which said: PACO MEET ME AT HOTEL MONTANA NOON TUESDAY ALL IS FORGIVEN PAPA and how a squadron of Guardia Civil had to be called out to disperse the eight hundred young men who answered the advertisement. (34)

The irony of the brief paragraph not only demonstrates the problematic relationships of many boys with their fathers, but also seems to symbolically hint at the vast portion of the population that might experience a similar situation to Paco's. The young man is represented as idealistic and very confused about his future as he appears to be mixing up ideals: indeed, we read that “the tall waiter represented to him revolution and revolution was also romantic. He himself would like to be a good catholic, a revolutionary, and have a steady job like this, while, at the same time, being a bullfighter” (38). Bullfighting is his ultimate dream, becoming a *torero* would seem to satisfy his deepest desires. He is very much attracted by three bullfighters who are living in the Pension Luarca, “the only ones who really existed” (35) among the guests. The first fundamental point to be made about the story's treatment of the bullfighter ideal concerns how Hemingway decided to portray these men. In fact, instead of being those depictions of virility which were described above, they are second-rate

professionals who hardly resemble the model of pure manhood expected from them: “of the three matadors one was ill and trying to conceal it; one had passed his short vogue as a novelty; and the third was a coward” (ibid.). Moreover, their daily lives seem to be characterised by boredom and vulgarity, as readers are given a glimpse of their time in their bedrooms:

the matador who was ill was lying face down on his bed alone. The matador who was no longer a novelty was sitting looking out of his window preparatory to walking out to the café. The matador who was a coward had the older sister of Paco in his room with him, and was trying to get her to do something which she was laughingly refusing to do. (37)

The three of them certainly set very low expectations as far as the model of the bullfighter is concerned: they represent failure and their presence clashes with their idealisation by Paco. The short story strongly underlines the difference between the reality and the ideal, presenting characters that, instead of appearing as the heroic figures they are socially expected to be, are rather struggling with their daily existence, only trying but failing to give the appearance of respectability. As Strychacz observes, the short story “presents nothing but also-rans. The Pension Luarca, as its reputation as a repository of 'Second-rate matadors' would suggest, houses several varieties of professional failures” (*Dangerous* 57).

Nevertheless, Paco does not notice his heroes' fallacies: to him, becoming a bullfighter is a dream and possibly the goal of his life. When left alone with only the dishwasher Enrique, he starts to perform a bullfight, as he imagines to confront a “very brave” bull with his skilful moves (41). His colleague accuses him of not being afraid enough of the animal: according to Enrique, fear is a necessary feature of a good torero, who can then learn to “control his fear so that he can work the bull” (42). Paco is so

confident about his fearless talent that in order to prove it he is ready to perform a fight right there in the restaurant, a fantasised rite of initiation into manhood: Enrique agrees to play the bull by binding two meat knives at the legs of a chair and charging him repeatedly (ibid.). It could not end well and indeed it does not, as this passage demonstrates:

[T]he bull turned and came again and, as he watched the onrushing point, he stepped his left foot two inches too far forward and the knife did not pass, but had slipped in as easily as into a wineskin and there was a hot scalding rush above and around the sudden inner rigidity of steel and Enrique shouting 'Ay! Ay! Let me get it out!' and Paco slipped forward on the chair, the apron cape still held, Enrique puffing on the chair as the knife turned in him, in him, Paco. (44)

In his typical concise narrative style, Hemingway manages to represent the desperation and tragedy of the situation. At the same time, however, Paco's death seems inconsequential: while he feels “his life go out of him as dirty water empties from a bathtub when the plug is drawn”, his sisters are “in the moving picture Palace of the Gran Via, where they were intensely disappointed in the Greta Garbo film”, while “[a]ll the other people from the hotel were doing almost what they had been doing when the accident happened”, and he dies “full of illusions” (45).

The protagonist's end is caused by his attempt to adapt to an ideal of masculinity. Not only are his ideals ridiculed by the actual lives of three failed toreros, but also he dies after trying to emulate the model he wishes to eventually become: even though his acts are apparently well performed, “the codes he puts into play are dangerous and destructive” (Strychacz, *Dangerous* 50).

Indeed, throughout the tales included in *The First Forty-Nine Stories*, the author

presented characters connected to the bullfighting world, but they are seldom represented as actual winners; moreover, when depicted as such, Hemingway never portrays them in an idealised manner, as they either suffer from bad wounds or are possibly between life and death. For instance, in the 1925 collection *In Our Time*, between the stories a number of brief sketches are found, six of which are about bullfighting. In the first, “Chapter IX”, three *matadors* are fighting in the arena: “[t]he first matador got the horn through his sword hand and the crowd hooted him out. The second matador slipped and the bull caught him through the belly and he hung on to the horn with one hand” (149). The third bullfighter is a young man, who although manages to defeat the five remaining bulls, at the end is represented as “[h]e sat down in the sand and puked and they held a cape over him” (ibid.). Although he is not in fact beaten, neither is he a model of grace and strength. “Chapter XIII” introduces a bullfighter who is “drunk all right” (179), although we learn from a conversation between two of his colleagues that he is supposed to fight that same afternoon. In the following sketch, one of the two toreros, possibly after having taken the drunk man's place, is represented in his last moments: “Maera lay still, his head on his arms, his face in the sand. He felt warm and sticky from the bleeding. Each time he felt the horn coming. Sometimes the bull only bumped him with his head. Once the horn went all the way through him and he felt it go into the sand” (195). Indeed, it is a violent scene of death, carefully described by Hemingway. After a few lines, we read that “everything commenced to run faster and faster as when they speed up a cinematograph film. Then he was dead” (ibid.). These above mentioned scenes of bullfighting are as far from an ideal as it could be: when they are not slaughtered by the bulls, the *matadors* are hardly in the condition to stand with pride. The opening short story of *Men Without Women* (1927), interestingly named “The Undefeated”, presents a similar narrative pattern, in which the

once wounded bullfighter Manuel Garcia decides to go back to the arena. Even though by the end of the tale he is in fact undefeated, having killed two bulls, he has to be brought into an operating room, and is last seen on an operating table that might very well become his death bed, as “Manuel felt tired. His whole chest felt scalding inside. He started to cough and they held something to his mouth” (250).

As already stated before, among the different types of manhood that he wrote about, Hemingway considered the bullfighter to be the noblest, most gracious and pure. Nevertheless, in his production he tended to describe rather deeply problematic characters, who certainly could not be taken as models to be followed. Failure is present in the lives of these men, as they seem condemned to constant decline and boredom. Moreover, as the death of Paco shows in “The Capital of the World,” the ideal is not only hardly achievable, but is also dangerous and possibly avoidable. For a man who adored the tradition of bullfighting, both for its values and its practices, Hemingway depicted a series of rather grim episodes which certainly had no positive outcomes for those who experienced them.

2.4.3. “The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber”

The opening tale of *The First Forty-Nine Stories* is the 1936 piece “The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber”: not only is it considered as one of the best writings by Hemingway, but it is also among the author himself's favourite stories, who declared his predilection in the brief but distinctive preface to the collection.¹⁶ Like most of the writer's production, the short story was inspired by the author's life: indeed, between 1933 and 1934 Ernest and his second wife Pauline Pfeiffer spent more than seven

¹⁶ The passage reads: “There are many kinds of stories in this book. I hope you will find some that you like. Reading them over, the ones I liked the best, outside of those that have achieved some notoriety so that school teachers include them in story collections that their pupils have to buy in story courses, [...] are The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber, In Another Country, Hills Like White Elephants, A Way You'll Never Be, The Snows of Kilimanjaro, A Clean Well-Lighted Place, and a story called The Light of the World which nobody else ever liked” (v).

months on a safari in Eastern Africa (Wagner-Martin 106-11). In 1935, he published *Green Hills of Africa*, a non-fiction account of their journey and of the experience of big-game hunting. The book was strongly criticised, and Hemingway suffered from a severe depression, during which he started to blame his problems on the wealthy women in his life, among whom was his wife. This situation led to the production of two short stories dealing with 'castrating' wives and coward men, both set during a safari: "The Snows of Kilimanjaro" and "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber" (Sanderson 184-86).

The tale has been widely analysed by scholars, who presented varied interpretations throughout the years. It is useful to read the short story as representing once again a failed attempt to reach an ideal of manhood, in this specific case embodied by the figure of the hunter. During his life, Hemingway had become the representative for this activity: it was indeed a matter of importance, considering the centrality of the figure as a "key component of American mythology" (Maier 267). It was already mentioned the fact that the author was given his first rifle at the age of twelve: hunting became one of his favourite passions and he would practice it for his whole life. The experience of the safari in Kenya and Tanzania during the 1930s allowed him to experiment big-game hunting in a territory that he would later romanticise as "the new frontier", a replacement for the Northern American "private testing grounds for manly courage and heroism" (Armengol, *Race-ing* 50) which were lost after the end of the territorial expansion of the 19th century. Moreover, the African setting involves some "racial" implications which have been under critical scrutiny through the years: Hemingway's ideological relation with the continent is usually understood as divided in an earlier and a later phase.¹⁷ If on the one hand his early works set in Africa, inspired by his first safari, featured an imperialistic representation of the natives as "others" (ibid. 45), on

¹⁷ For a more complete discussion see Armengol, (2011) and Lewis, (2013).

the other hand the writings produced after a second experience in some African countries between 1953 and 1954 presented more developed “insight[s] into the sociopolitical and economic climates that fostered anti-imperialist thoughts and actions among native Africans throughout the twentieth century” (Lewis 321). Considering that hegemonic masculinity is also built on the subordination and oppression of those that Connell defines as marginalised masculinities, defined for instance by their ethnicity, it might be useful to take into consideration Hemingway's depiction of the natives and their culture. On the whole, “The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber” is a story which reveals a complex series of issues which, more or less explicitly, create a problematic representation of the model of masculinity which the protagonist has to deal with.

The story opens with a scene in which the three main characters are presented: Francis and Margaret (also referred to as Margot) Macomber, a married couple on safari, and Robert Wilson, a professional hunter and their guide on the trip. From the very first lines, the complex relationship between them is evident to the readers:

It was now lunch time and they were all sitting under the double green fly of the dining tent pretending that nothing had happened.

'Will you have lime juice or lemon squash?' Macomber asked.

'I'll have a gimlet,' Robert Wilson told him.

'I'll have a gimlet too. I need something,' Macomber's wife said. (3)

The tension among the three of them is obvious: something has happened and they are refusing to talk about it. In the limited amount of informations provided, what would appear to be a simple exchange has been read to represent in fact the assertion of Wilson over Francis, and Margaret yielding to the strong man's authority (Bender 13).

Moreover, even the drinks become charged with symbolic meaning of power structure: indeed, if on the one hand Francis proposes to have a soft drink, which suggests that he “has not yet learned Hemingway's manly art of drinking alcohol” (ibid.), on the other hand Wilson asks for a gimlet, a cocktail prepared with gin and lime, named after a tool for drilling holes. Thus, the beverage is charged with phallic and erotic symbolism, and as Margaret follows Wilson's suggestion rather than her husband's, the scene seems to be foreshadowing their sexual encounter which will actually take place in a later stage of the tale. The reason of the tension starts to be clearer as the men begin to talk about the lion which Macomber has supposedly killed on a hunting trip: while the two exchange words that seem more pleasantries than anything, Margaret appears to be incredulous and furious about their indifference:

'You've got your lion,' Robert Wilson said to him, 'and a damned fine one too.'

Mrs Macomber looked at Wilson quickly. [...]

'He is a good lion, isn't he?' Macomber said. His wife looked at him now. She looked at both these men as though she had never seen them before. (4)

Readers are still not aware, but the hunt was in fact a failure, and Francis “had just shown himself, very publicly, to be a coward” (ibid.) by running away from the lion he was chasing, dangerously leaving Wilson and the native gun-bearers to do the killing. Macomber's reputation is spoiled, according to hegemonic standards of masculinity, as he gave proof of his fear and lack of manly bravery in front of his wife, his fellow hunter and their African helpers: all of these characters demonstrate a deep contempt for Francis, as Margaret can hardly talk to her husband, Wilson thinks of him as “a bloody four-letter man as well as a bloody coward” (6), and the gun bearers refuse to celebrate his apparent achievement with the other servants, who are at that point still unaware of

the facts (3).

The story of the hunt is eventually unfolded in a flashback, in which the protagonist recalls the events of the day. On the previous morning, many were the instances in which the man felt fear, right from the moment during the night when “he had awakened and heard the lion roaring somewhere up along the river. It was a deep sound and at the end there were sort of coughing grunts that made him seem just outside the tent, and when Francis Macomber woke in the night to hear it he was afraid” (10). He cannot share his terror with anyone, not only because he is alone, but also because he would put his masculinity at risk: when during breakfast his wife asks him “You're not afraid, are you?”, he is forced to answer “Of course not. But I'm nervous from hearing him roar all night” (12). Actually, several passages give away Macomber's real feelings: for instance, after having spotted the lion and preparing to shoot, “his hands were shaking and as he walked away from the car it was almost impossible for him to make his legs move” (14), and he starts shooting without even realising that the safety of his rifle is on. His fear appears to be shameful to the protagonist who refuses to confess it to his companions: nevertheless, there is a very brief but interesting passage in which the narrator makes a comment which presents a different perspective on the issue: “lying alone, [Francis] did not know the Somali proverb that says a brave man is always frightened three times by a lion; when he first sees his track, when he first hears him roar and when he first confronts him” (11). Even though this short story can be considered as part of Hemingway's first African phase which was discussed in an earlier paragraph, meaning that at this point of his production native cultures were mostly left aside and not given much consideration, I believe that the choice to introduce a Somali proverb in the text offers a deeper level of complexity to the story: if on the one hand the feeling of fear is not contemplated in the social construction of Western hegemonic

masculinity, on the other hand it is in fact perfectly normal to the native culture, certainly more expert about lions, even for a brave man. By including a perspective which contradicts expectations of the West, the author implicitly problematised its construction of masculinity by implying that what is true for a culture might not be for another.

During the hunt, when facing the lion, Francis proposes at first to shoot it from the car; then, once the animal has gone hiding in the tall grass after having been wounded, the protagonist tries everything to avoid following the wild beast:

'Can't we set the grass on fire?' Macomber asked.

'Too green.'

'Can't we send beaters?'

Wilson looked at him appraisingly. 'Of course we can,' he said. 'But it's just a touch murderous. You see we know the lion's wounded. [...] A wounded lion's going to charge.'

(15-16)

Realising that all his attempts to keep away from the deadly animal are failing, the man's anxiety and fear intensify. At a certain point, he even declares that he does not want to go in there. It is only at that moment that the professional hunter realises what is actually going on with Francis: "Robert Wilson, whose entire occupation had been with the lion and the problem he presented, and who had not been thinking about Macomber except to note that he was rather windy, suddenly felt as though he had opened the wrong door in a hotel and seen something shameful" (16). Fear is once again stressed and considered dishonourable. The scene continues with the two hunters and their helpers entering the brush and being attacked by the roaring lion: "they had just moved into the grass when Macomber heard the blood-choked coughing grunt, and saw the

swishing rush in the grass. The next thing he knew he was running; running wildly, in panic in the open, running toward the stream” (18). Everyone else's contempt is palpable, and after the lion is killed Francis refuses even to take pictures, as if already trying to forget and delete the episode from his life.

Margaret is ashamed, and in the car she kisses Wilson “on the mouth” (19) while avoiding to talk to her husband, foreshadowing the sexual intercourse that would happen between them later the same day: indeed, when Macomber wakes up during the night, his wife is not in the tent with him, and returns two hours later. When Francis accuses her of being “a bitch”, she responds “Well, you're a coward” (21). The woman's disappointment is so strong that she ends up betraying her partner with a person whom she considers to be as more “manly” than her husband: the consequences of failing to adjust to an ideal of manhood are thus amplified also by their marital breakdown.

The short story ends the day after the lion accident: the party goes on a buffalo hunt, and after having spotted, chased and shot the animals Macomber declares to his fellow hunter: “Something happened in me after we first saw the buff and started after him. Like a dam bursting. It was pure excitement” (29). His words seem to convince Wilson, who quite unquestioningly is ready to consider Francis as a 'true man,' rather than the coward he was a few hours before: “[h]e'd seen it in the war work the same way. More of a change than any loss of virginity. Fear gone like an operation. Something else grew in its place. Main thing a man had. Made him into a man. Women knew it too. No bloody fear” (30). Even though only a few hours have elapsed, and Macomber has not really faced a dangerous animal but rather shot it from far away, Wilson appears to be ready to declare his cowardliness and fear gone. According to his perspective, women should notice the change, but actually Margaret very ironically

comments “You're both talking rot. [...] Just because you've chased some helpless animals in a motor car you talk like heroes” and, directly to her husband, “You've gotten awfully brave, awfully suddenly” (ibid.). She seems to be the voice of reason among the three, and the living proof that women do not seem to think as Wilson would like them to. Moreover, she questions the professional hunter's actions, as she points to the fact that chasing animals by car is actually illegal, in addition to be unfair: as Nina Baym suggests, “she [...] recognizes that the animals in the wild are not true adversaries, because they are so massively overpowered by the men's technology – their guns, their cars” (114). The hunter, model of masculinity, sees his proceedings questioned, as his actions are revealed to be irregular, causing his ideal status to be doubted.

The tragic conclusion approaches: one of the buffaloes was not killed and went hiding in the bushes after the hunters had gone chasing another beast. Similarly to the lion scene, the two men and their helpers approach the spot where the wounded animal took cover: when they are unexpectedly charged,

Wilson had ducked to one side to get in a shoulder shot. Macomber had stood solid and shot for the nose, shooting a touch high each time and hitting the heavy horns, splintering and chipping them like hitting a slate roof, and Mrs Macomber, in the car, had shot at the buffalo with the 6.5 Mannlicher as it seemed to gore Macomber and had hit her husband about two inches up and a little to one side of the base of his skull. (32)

The protagonist is killed by his wife: whether she acted on purpose or not has been an everlasting question for the critics. Philip Young considers the story as the representation of a male process of learning to honour the code and the feminine attempt to annihilate it: when Macomber attains his manhood, he automatically “regains the

ithyphallic authority he had lost and his wife [...] must destroy him literally” (Young 70). According to a similar reading of the story, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar accused Hemingway of giving a simplistic and negative representation of the woman by misogynistically portraying her as utterly cruel and murderous (41). Nevertheless, this reading of the tale is rather limited: Strychacz deems that “[n]egotiating what Hemingway omits from his narratives [...] is a deeply problematic activity, for modernist strategies of narrative gaps [...] impose strictures on the acquisition of absolute knowledge. [...] The evidence for any final reading of Margot's actions and motives is simply inadequate” (*Theaters* 15). Furthermore, even though critics seemed to take Macomber's passage into 'true manhood' for granted, it is not actually “self-evident. [...] Aiming carefully and standing solidly are simply what one does to stay alive” (ibid. 16). To believe Francis would mean to superficially accept the word of a man who is ashamed of himself and is trying to regain his wife and his fellow hunter's respect.

“The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber” has been too often read as an account of the protagonist's achievement of a hegemonic masculinity through a process of learning to overcome his fears and develop a manly code of behaviour. In fact, not only is the ideal model, personified by Wilson, constantly questioned by Margaret and, albeit briefly, by the native culture, but also the vicissitudes and ultimate death of Macomber appear to symbolise the unbearable weight of the hegemonic masculinity that he was attempting to achieve. Whatever ideal men are exposed to and are supposed to fulfil, they seem bound to fail.

2.4.4. Fathers and Husbands

As demonstrated in the previous sections of this work, many types of ideal masculinities

are explored and problematised in the short stories included in the collection: most of those tales are set in rural locations and their focus is on masculinities which are far from urban middle class models of manhood. Nevertheless, throughout *The First Forty-Nine Stories* Hemingway does represent a conspicuous number of situations in which more bourgeois figures of fathers and husbands – as well as unwed partners – are protagonists. As the family is a central institution of the patriarchal power structure, it might be interesting to analyse the portrayals of those men in the author's production. For this section of my research I am focusing on various stories: I deem that only by presenting the different perspectives developed it would be possible to report the complexities of Hemingway's depiction of the bourgeois patriarch.

The author's own father, Clarence Hemingway, was certainly a reference point for the fictive version contained in the three Nick Adams short stories “Indian Camp”, “The Doctor and the Doctor's Wife” and “Fathers and Sons”.¹⁸ He was a physician, and had introduced Ernest to the outdoors, in the forms of hunting and fishing, from a very early age. During his son's adolescence he began to suffer from depression, the causes of which Ernest unjustly identified in his mother's strong personality and overbearingness (Raeburn 13). His condition never improved, and he eventually shot himself in 1928, preceding his son's own suicide more than thirty years. Nick Adam's father is himself a doctor, and directs his male child towards open air activities. His description contained in “Fathers and Sons” could easily be Clarence's, as he is depicted “precisely as photographs represent Dr. Hemingway” (Young 60).¹⁹ Although the cause of his death is not specified, we are told that “[h]e had died in a trap that he had helped only a little to

¹⁸ Interestingly enough, “Indian Camp” is the first story which presents Nick Adams as the protagonist, whereas “Fathers and Sons” is the last; moreover, the latter is also the conclusive short story of the collection.

¹⁹ The passage reads: “Hunting this country for quail as his father had taught him, Nicholas Adams started thinking about his father. When he first thought about him it was always the eyes. The big frame, the quick movements, the wide shoulders, the hooked, hawk nose, the beard that covered the weak chin, you never thought about – it was always the eyes” (458).

set, and they had all betrayed him in their various ways before he died” (458), which might very well be connected to a suicide: moreover, the fact that it is said that an undertaker had done a handsome job with his face (460), is pretty much revealing that he actually died of a head wound, probably caused by himself. The short stories which I am about to analyse present different events which, if read together, reveal a complex character whose existence is distinguished by professional triumphs as well as low self esteem and humiliation.

“Indian Camp” is once again set in Michigan, as many other Nick Adams stories. The protagonist is still young, and the story is usually read as a passage from childhood to the adult world, an initiation through an “incident which brings the boy into contact with something that is perplexing and unpleasant” (Young 31). He is directed, together with his father and uncle, to an Ojibway camp, inhabited by the native people of the area, where the doctor is supposed to help a pregnant woman to give birth: the “racial” element holds an important role in the story, right from the very first lines. Indeed, the scene opens with the three characters arriving on a lake shore where two natives are waiting for them. It is not far fetched to read the situation as “an archetypal moment of different sort. Boats beached, Indians waiting, whites debarking: the scene of whites arriving in the New World or encountering tribes [...] is strong in cultural memories” (Strychacz, *Theaters* 55). When they arrive on shore, “[u]ncle George gave both the Indians cigars” (83) as a compensation, certainly reminding of the unequal relationships between the Natives and the white men, “iterating a long history of territories purchased by means of trinkets and other cheap gifts” (ibid.). In the camp, they are led to the shanty where the pregnant woman is:

Inside on a wooden bunk lay a young Indian woman. She had been trying to have her baby for two days. All the old women in the camp had been helping her. The men had

moved off up the road to sit in the dark and smoke out of range of the noise she made. She screamed just as Nick and the two Indians followed his father and Uncle George into the shanty. (84)

In this complicated situation, the white man arrives and is able to succeed where the native women have failed: with his Western scientific knowledge and competent skills he starts operating on the desperate and suffering woman. He has no anaesthetic, and as her pain continues, he indifferently says that “[H]er screams are not important. I don't hear them because they are not important” (ibid.). He appears to be more interested in demonstrating his abilities to his son and, indirectly, to the people in the cabin. He performs the role of the saviour and wise white man, and the use of his expertise implies by contrast “the Native American's ignorance of hygiene and medical procedure. His actions and words suggest their general cultural incompetence” (Strychacz, *Theaters* 55). After the child is born, he appears to be very impressed with his actions:

He was feeling exalted and talkative as football players are in the dressing room after a game.

'That's one for the medical journal, George,' he said. 'Doing a Caesarian with a jack-knife and sewing it up with nine-foot, tapered gut leaders.' (86)

The woman's suffering, irrelevant to the doctor, provided a test bed for his performance of knowledge and wisdom, which in a way invalidated old customs and methods of the Ojibway. The doctor searches for even more legitimisation by wanting to show his deeds to the woman's companion: nevertheless, a tragic event had taken place during the operation. The native father is laying on the upper bunk of the bed because of a bad foot wound gotten with an ax a few days before: when the physician suggests to take a look

at him, as according to him “[fathers] are usually the worst sufferers in these little affairs” (ibid.), a dreadful image is presented:

He pulled back the blanket from the Indian's head. His hand came away wet. He mounted on the edge of the lower bunk with the lamp in one hand and looked in. The Indian lay with his face toward the wall. His throat had been cut from ear to ear. The blood had flowed down into a pool where his body sagged the bunk. His head rested on his left arm.

The open razor lay, edge up, in the blankets. (ibid.)

The reasons for the man's action are not specified, but there are elements that can be analysed and taken into consideration for this research. The suicide might be symbolically representing a refusal of the duties and consequences of fatherhood. Nevertheless, as Strychacz suggests, the Ojibway's death holds a much deeper symbolic weight: several are the ways in which his role as father is jeopardised (*Time* 62). First of all, the white man held the power in his home and applied his culturally different methods for the birth of his child: he is forced to witness the performance of Western power over his own family and people without being able to help. He seems to be stuck in a similar situation to his wife's, in that he lies in the same bed and presents a cut which in a way resembles the woman's. Also, if his culture restricted the procedure of helping a pregnant woman to give birth solely to other women, now his wife is treated by another man: “[t]he doctor, on his part, not only transgresses an age-old custom (and possesses a knowledge of the woman's sexuality previously appropriate only to the husband and the 'old women'), but gives rise to the suspicion that the old customs are no longer valid and powerful” (ibid.).

“Indian Camp” presents a dual representation of fatherhood and masculinity: if on the one hand Nick's father resulted to hold a stronger power thanks to his skills and was

proud to show them to his son, the Ojibway man personified refusal and humiliation. Nevertheless, the situation is turned upside-down and utterly problematised in the short story that follows it in the collection, namely “The Doctor and the Doctor's Wife”, as the roles taken by the physician and the native man are inverted altogether.

The scene is now set in the Adams' house: three natives come to the dwelling to cut up some logs which were lost from a steamer and had ended up on the beach next to the doctor's house. Now the Ojibway are those who penetrate the white man's territory, and are symbolically armed: “[t]hey came in through the back gate out of the woods, Eddy carrying the long cross-cut saw. It flopped over his shoulder and made a musical sound as he walked. Billy Tabeshaw carried two big cant-hooks. Dick had three axes under his arm” (91). Doctor Adams is now availing himself of the natives' assistance: however, rather than helped, he finds himself accused by Dick Boulton, one of the three Ojibway, of having stolen the logs.

'Well Doc,' he said, 'that's a nice lot of timber you've stolen.'

'Don't talk that way, Dick,' the doctor said. 'It's driftwood.' [...]

'You know they're stolen as well as I do. It don't make any difference to me.' (92)

Following with the symbolic historical reading of the tale, the tense exchange between the two over the logs “disguises the fact that the garden (like the logs) has been expropriated from the Native Americans in the first place” (Strychacz, *Theaters* 59). If in “Indian Camp” the Westerner arrives in the Ojibway territory forcing his knowledge and, as a consequence, hegemonically imposing his masculinity, in “The Doctor and The Doctor's Wife” he finds himself in the position of being accused for the wrongs and the methods of his own people. He tries to threaten Boulton by a violent, albeit weak “If you call me Doc once again, I'll knock your eye teeth down your throat” (93), but

has to acknowledge the outmatching strength of the adversary: “Dick was a big man. He knew how big a man he was. He liked to get into fights. He was happy” (ibid.). Adams can only choose to withdraw from the fight, humiliated by the native: it feels much different from the self-celebratory behaviour at the end of the successful operation in the previously analysed short story. Once back to the house, the doctor goes in his own room, a private space where he could deal with his grief, if only he were not lectured by his wife about Christian precepts:

'Was anything the matter?'

'I had a row with Dick Boulton.'

'Oh,' said his wife. 'I hope you didn't lose your temper, Henry.'

'No,' said the doctor.

'Remember, that he who ruleth his spirit his greater than he that taketh a city,' said his wife. She was a Christian Scientist. (ibid.)

In the meanwhile, doctor Adams is busy in what looks like a masturbatory activity: indeed, as if he were trying to regain his proud masculinity, he does not answer his wife's remarks, but rather prefers to manipulate his rifle: “[h]e was sitting on his bed now, cleaning a shotgun. He pushed the magazine full of the heavy yellow shells and pumped them out again. They were scattered on the bed. [...] He sat with the gun on his knees. He was very fond of it” (93-94). The instrument possibly symbolises the masculine strength that he feels to have lost in the face of a stronger adversary. Nevertheless, the house does not seem to be enough of a private masculine space, and he is incapable of facing his wife: for these reasons, he decides to go out for a walk in the woods. On his way there, his humiliation persists, as “he must [...] apologize for slamming the screen door, unlike Dick Boulton, who deliberately leaves the gate into

the woods open” (Strychacz, *Time* 65). Once he is gone, he meets Nick, who is reading by a tree, and when he tells him that his mother wants him to go back home, the young boy answers “I want to go with you” (94). Doctor Adams' self-esteem starts to revitalise as the child chooses him over his wife: the short story concludes with father and son walking together towards the woods, looking for black squirrels to hunt.

Even though the boy appears to admire his father, we are given a glimpse of Nick's adult years in the already cited and appropriately titled short story “Fathers and Sons”: the thirty-eight year old man's opinion of his paternal figure does not seem to have improved with the years, but rather worsened. Adams has become a father himself, and has set on a quail hunting trip with his son, who is sleeping next to him in the car. The situation reminds him of his past and he starts thinking about his dead father: apparently, “he was very grateful to him for two things: fishing and shooting” (459). Even though those activities are important in Nick's life, as well as in the author's, being the only reasons he finds to be thankful to his father might be suggesting a limited relationship between the two. As a matter of fact, he seems to be critical about the education he was given, especially concerning sex: “His father had summed up the whole matter by stating that masturbation produced blindness, insanity, and death, while a man who went with prostitutes would contract hideous venereal diseases and that the thing to do was to keep your hands off people” (460). Even though the recommendations were common at the time, as the discussion was influenced by the theories of social hygiene, the protagonist, as well as Hemingway himself, appears to be resisting the norms of middle-class morality in which he was raised. Furthermore, among Nick's thoughts there is a remark by which we are told that “[n]ow, knowing how it had all been, even remembering the earliest times before things had gone badly was not good remembering” (ibid.). Considering Clarence Hemingway's

aforementioned depression and keeping him as a reference in the analysis of the character, it is safe to assume that Nick could not overcome the burden of the paternal crisis as much as Ernest himself could not cope with his own father's illness and eventual suicide.

When his son wakes up and questions him, Nick is suddenly startled: although “[h]e had felt quite alone” (465), his boy had been with him. He wants to know when he will get a shotgun for himself, and the answer is twelve years old, the age when Hemingway received his first rifle. The child proceeds by inquiring about his grandfather:

'What was my grandfather like? I can't remember him except that he gave me an air rifle and an American flag when I came over from France that time. What was he like?'

'He's hard to describe. He was a great hunter and fisherman and he had wonderful eyes.'

'Was he greater than you?'

'He was a much better shot and his father was a great wing shot too.' (466)

Not only Nick is not able to indicate any other quality than his father's abilities as an outdoor man, but he also bitterly comments that he was always disappointed in the way his son shot (467). Apparently, he has never brought his child to his grandfather's grave, as if rejecting the memory of his parent. Even though the short story concludes with Nick saying “‘We'll have to go, [...] I can see we'll have to go’” (ibid.), it cannot be certain if he does in fact change his mind or not: nevertheless, the trauma might already be too profound in him, as demonstrated by his earlier soliloquy.

In the three short stories analysed, the author was able to treat “the cultural, familial, and gender conflicts” (Strychacz, *Theaters* 55) which are central to his production. Moreover, I believe that the problematisation of fatherhood is utterly

interesting: fathers, as Hemingway represents them, have lost the distinctive patriarchal flare, and are depicted as broken human beings rather than the powerful and firm pillars of the bourgeois household. The author manages to analyse a man's life in terms of specific situations “rather than of universal existential conditions” (Strychacz, *Masculinity* 284), thus providing a complex array of characters which truly portray actual people and not idealised versions of a model of manhood.

A parallel discourse related to that of fatherhood in the bourgeois family is the one relative to the relationships between husbands and wives, as well as unwed heterosexual couples. Hardly any family or relationship represented by Hemingway in his work is unproblematic. There is a remarkable number of disenchanted couples in *The First Forty-Nine Stories*, starting with the already discussed Francis and Margaret in “The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber”, as well as the Adams family itself.²⁰ For my research I will analyse two brief, albeit meaningful, stories, namely “Hills Like White Elephants” and “The Sea Change”, the first originally published in 1927 in *Men Without Women*, the second in the 1933 collection *Winner Take Nothing*. What I deem most interesting about the two pieces of writing is not so much the fact that the couples represented are dealing with crises, indeed a common situation in the author's production, but rather the causes that led them to a confrontation.

“Hills Like White Elephants” is set in a small station in the valley of the Ebro in Spain. A man and a woman are apparently waiting for a train to Madrid, while sipping several *cervezas*. Only after a few drinks and a trivial conversation does the real issue come to light, as the man says:

'It's really an awfully simple operation, Jig. [...] It's not really an operation at all.'

²⁰ Other appropriate examples can be found in “The Snows of Kilimanjaro,” “The End of Something,” “A Very Short Story,” “Mr and Mrs Elliot,” “Cat in the Rain,” “A Canary for One,” “One Reader Writes.”

The girl looked at the ground the table legs rested on.

'I know you wouldn't mind it, Jig. It's really not anything. It's just to let the air in.'

The girl did not say anything. (260-61)

Even though it is never specified, it is obvious that they are discussing an abortion. The man is trying to convince his partner to take the operation, but she does not appear to be certain about it. She highly doubts that their life would serenely continue, but he firmly believes that the abortion is “the best thing to do” (261). Not only does he seem to be trying to avoid fatherhood, but also the normative conjugal relationship that would most probably follow the birth of a child. As a matter of fact, although he declares “I don't want anybody but you. I don't want anyone else” (262), it would seem that he is desperately frightened about the consequences of what he considers a mistake rather than a sincere declaration of his affection for the woman. She is reluctant to give a definite answer, and abruptly ends the conversation with a “Would you please please please please please please stop talking?” (263). The brief story finishes with the forthcoming arrival of the train, and without the issue being solved. The normative relational model of the family, in part consisting of the roles of father and husband, is totally rejected by the male protagonist, who distances himself from social expectations.

A similar situation is presented in “The Sea Change”, as once again a couple is found discussing in a café early in the morning. Although the subject of the conversation is quite different from the one presented in the previous short story, it can still be read as the representation of a failing heterosexual relationship. In this case the key point of the dialogue is the woman's homosexuality: she is trying to leave her partner for another woman. Apparently, their relation was problematic, indeed when he says “I don't have it my own way. I wish to God I did,” she replies “You did for a long time” (371). Her affair is definitely not the only reason why their relationship is coming

to an end. He is not able to accept not much her betrayal in itself, but rather the fact that on the other side there is a woman: nevertheless, his partner guarantees him that “It wouldn't be a man” (372), a statement which might sound both like an attempt to reassure him as well as an implicit refusal to having to deal with men again. He cannot accept her leaving, and starts to accuse her, defining her homosexuality as a “vice” and a “perversion” (373): interestingly enough, the woman replies thus:

'I'd like it better if you didn't use words like that,' the girl said. 'There's no necessity to use a word like that.'

'What do you want me to call it?'

'You don't have to call it. You don't have to put any name to it.'

'That's the name for it.'

'No,' she said. 'We're made up of all sorts of things.' (373-374)

The author decided to depict the female protagonist resisting “the efforts of her male companion [...] to label her desire for another woman”, a sign that Hemingway “was deeply affected by the sexual and gender revolution that reshaped the early twentieth-century world” (Moddelmog 363). At the end of the story, the man is finally convinced and accepts her leaving, asking her to tell him all about it (374): he has gone through a difficult process which nevertheless eventually made him more open-minded. He declares to the barman: “I'm a different man, James. [...] You see in me quite different man'. [...] Looking in the mirror he saw that this was quite true” (374-75).

This last section of my analysis, if read together with the examination of the representation of fatherhood in *The First Forty-Nine Stories*, might reveal some interesting features of Hemingway's depiction of the figures of fathers and husbands/partners. The situations he wrote about present complex characters that, when

taken together, form a much different figure than the ideal model of patriarch expected from middle-class men. His protagonists refuse to take part in the familial institution, and relationships are mostly represented as failing. Moreover, the figure of the father appears to be far from the ideal conservative model as socially expected by the bourgeois mind-set. All in all, Hemingway's writings concerned with the nuclear family are in line with the representation of models and types of manhood which, rather than reproducing ideals of hegemonic masculinity, are affected by failure and elements of crisis which define their existences.

CONCLUSIONS

This thesis has been an attempt to acknowledge the importance of Masculinity Studies, and has followed the theoretical formulations that since the mid-20th century have been forming within this minor, albeit expanding branch of the wider Gender Studies spectrum. For this very reason, the three main waves that shaped the field of studies, and their more or less progressive tendencies were introduced in the theoretical chapter of the research. Issues related to the destabilisation of traditional male sex roles and to the deconstruction of essentialist ideals began to develop in the 1960s and 1970s, inspired by the social and political fights of second wave feminism and gay liberation movements. Nevertheless, the following decades saw a strong anti-feminist backlash in the form of the Mythopoetic Men's Movement, guided by the poet Robert Bly who, in his 1990 best-seller *Iron John*, presented the idea that men had been emasculated by various factors, such as the industrialisation and the feminisation of society. In order to overcome these burdens, he proposed the formation of gatherings of men through which the attendees could rediscover their “deep masculine” energy. The movement was strongly criticised for its essentialist, sexist and racist undertones: it revealed itself to be appealing for many men, even though of a specific range, namely the white, heterosexual and middle-class portion of the population. During the same period new perspectives related to the field of studies were forming, mainly led by R.W. Connell, who developed the concepts of hegemonic masculinity, the plurality of masculinities and consequently the relations of power among them. He believed that rather than grouping men as a homogeneous group, the differences between them are to be identified. The form of masculinity which holds an ideal social status and grants patriarchal power is defined as hegemonic by the scholar: it is neither permanent, indeed

it changes throughout history, nor is it practiced by most men. Even though only a minority among them might in fact be included in the hegemonic definition, most men gain from what Connell defines as the patriarchal dividend, thus making them complicit. Other forms which the scholar indicates are those of subordinated masculinities, which tend to be culturally stigmatised: homosexuals are considered as the most notable, albeit not only, example. Marginalised masculinities are also considered, and are represented for instance by black or working-class men. Furthermore, Connell thought that the hegemonic ideal of masculinity is historically shifting, as it presents different features according to the time and place in which it is formed. As my thesis deals with the works by Hemingway, it was necessary to provide an overview of the development and adjustments of the modern Western model of manhood, in order to have a reference for the later analysis of the North American author.

Masculinity is a fundamental theme in the writings of Ernest Hemingway, and a central element as a possible starting point from where to study his production. The author problematised the issue not only by characterising its multiple and different facets, but also by representing primary as well as secondary male characters who were hardly able to achieve the ideal model that society imposed on them. Conventionally male types such as sporting figures as well as more traditional bourgeois patriarchal roles were indeed the frequent protagonists of Hemingway's prose: nevertheless, rather than successfully fulfilling the social norms expected from them, they either failed or were sometimes unwilling to adapt to the hegemonic ideal of masculinity. As regards to the model of the boxer, it was demonstrated that even though the author enjoyed and practiced the sport himself, the characters he wrote about were very far from the ideal related to them, and rather than unbeatable champions, they were depicted as lost and distressed. Similar considerations were made about the figure of the bullfighter, whom

Hemingway not only appreciated but got to venerate throughout his life. In his short stories readers are not introduced to graceful characters, as in fact we find second-rate *toreros* who do not resemble the heroic figures they are supposed to be. With the analysis of “The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber” the hunter type was introduced, and once again it represented the failure of the protagonist to achieve the ideal of brave and strong manhood socially expected from him. The last section of the second chapter is devoted to the examination of the figures of fathers and husbands, as well as unwed partners, who in the author's writings become confused and weak rather than being idealised models of patriarchal power.

The symbolic power Ernest Hemingway held and continues to have up to these days is undeniable, and for this very reason I believe that his works have been functional to the formation of a complex image of masculinity, even though this has often been restricted by criticism to a less problematised version, as demonstrated in a previous section of this research. When I decided to study Hemingway I was aware of the extensive scholarly production written about the author. Whether by devotees or detractors, it appears that both his persona and his work have been regularly classified as masculinist and sexist, thus limiting the scope of possibly different analyses of the author. Although a more gender-centred approach to his production in fact started after the year 1986, I found that the question of the representation of masculinity has been seldom taken into consideration, if not by a limited number of critics: first among them was certainly the much-quoted Thomas Strychacz, who has provided an innovative approach to Hemingway, problematising, without justifying, the understanding of the writings by an artist who is still commonly labelled and thought of as misogynist. A possible future study could benefit from a more intersectional structure: indeed, it would be interesting to present different identity paradigms alongside masculinity. For

instance, sexuality and ethnicity are among the most central elements when it comes to the analysis of the internal stratification of men, and they would be relevant in a further analysis of Hemingway's production.

Even though I have decided to limit the focus of this research to the author's short fiction, I deem that it would be possible to study his entire work following a similar analytical structure. Hemingway's novels and non-fiction certainly present narrative patterns and character configurations similar to those employed in his stories: for this reason, I would be interested in expanding my analysis to a more ample body of work by the author. Moreover, an akin critical approach could be easily applied to the production of numerous other artists: re-reading more or less canonical writings by taking into account the theoretical formulations of Masculinity Studies might result into a more critical understanding and a possible subsequent deconstruction of patriarchal paradigms of manhood throughout the centuries. This thesis tries to demonstrate how typical readings of a canonical author such as Hemingway are bound to conventional analyses of gender patterns which are far from the actual written production by the artist. An innovative examination of his works and characters might in fact lead to a less manichean perspective and might problematise the complexities of the representation of masculinities in Ernest Hemingway's writings.

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