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THE REPRESENTATIONS OF MASCULINITIES IN 1920S AMERICAN
LITERATURE: ERNEST HEMINGWAY AND WILLA CATHER

A Thesis
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
in
English Composition

by
Omar Agustin Moran
September 2001


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A Thesis
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ABSTRACT

Views of masculinity are bound by time and culture. Each culture and epoch exacts what masculinity means and how it can be validated through a series of outward displays. Although there are many ways to examine the necessary display of masculinity for men, American literature of the 1920s provides an excellent basis by which to study masculine "performance" through representation. This thesis investigates the representation of masculinity through the works of Ernest Hemingway and Willa Cather. It studies Hemingway's In Our Time and The Sun Also Rises, where violence and ambivalence become necessary markers of masculinity; and explores Cather's O Pioneers! and "Paul's Case," where sentimentality and "other" masculinities act as disruptions to conventional ideals. In the process of examining these works, this thesis will also show how these authors unmask the complex nature of masculinity, defying, as a result, long-held patriarchal beliefs. This thesis develops from cultural, historical, and literary research, examining early twentieth-century gender ideologies and their ultimate effects on countless men.

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To Ivonne and Marlene

CHAPTER ONE
MASCULINITY AS PERFORMANCE

Introduction

Masculinity is determined by culture and time. In recent years masculinity has meant that a person exhibits characteristics of physical strength, bravery, and self-dependence, yet with an acknowledgment of being compassionate and emotionally open (Messner 243). These "masculine" characteristics, however, are never the same from one decade to the next, much less from one century to another. Arthur Brittan suggests in *Masculinity and Power* that "since gender does not exist outside history and culture, both masculinity and femininity are continuously subject to a process of reinterpretation. Masculinity, from this point of view, is always local and subject to change" (7, 9). Because masculinity is dependent on culture and time, contemporary gender theorists see masculinity as a social construction. We may be born male or female, but those aspects of behavior that are determined "masculine" or "feminine" are learned from a culture that delineates appropriate ways of being. From an early age we are indoctrinated with notions, attitudes, and "obvious" ways

of seeing ourselves and others through culturally determined gender lenses. As Judith Butler asserts, "It becomes impossible to separate gender from the political and cultural intersections in which it is invariably produced and maintained" (33).

However, in terms of the 1920s, the historical focal point of this thesis, "masculinity" was deemed a real and "established" element. In other words, masculinity was an entity that could be attained through continual displays of "right" behaviors and mindset (Kimmel 144). In fact, as Michael Kimmel asserts in *Manhood in America: A Cultural History*, the early twentieth-century, as a whole, provided much of the gender ideologies that only in recent years have been challenged (103). Because of this fact, the early twentieth-century becomes a pivotal time in which gender ideologies become politically and socially entrenched within the discourses and consciousness of American culture.

During the 1920s in particular, American society was in a state of continual flux as new perceptions of gender, world politics, and human psychology began to emerge (Kimmel 103). It was a time of the "new women" movements, which posed a threat to traditional power structures set

forth by patriarchy. The nation was as well recuperating from its first World War, creating a more cynical and violent view of the human character (Dubbert 184).

Psychology also developed as a new science that attempted to explain human phenomenon while, politically, there were new fears of Marxism, Fascism, social corruption, and the reality of a growing ethnic and racial divide. As a result, with the emergence of these movements, there was a political desire to guard society from these changes. From a gender perspective, "gender," now more than ever, had to be sanctioned to conventional patriarchal ideals (Kimmel 112). As such, men had to look, act, and think like "real men" in order to diffuse the cultural fragmentation produced by the social and political changes taking place. The 1920s was a decade that presented such a dire need to define what masculinity meant, that it began providing social "arenas" by which masculinity could be proven and regulated within society (Dubbert 54). Yet, how can we examine the exact ideological framework by which masculinity had to be "proven" during the 1920s?

Although throughout this thesis I will continually use cultural and historical research that examines the representation of masculinity through many forms of media

during the 1920's, I will show how American literature becomes an excellent medium to examine the issue of masculinity. American literature can form a "place" in which ideologies of masculinity become internalized and re-distributed through the act of reading. Through the act of reading, gendered identifications can serve ideological purposes; the text becomes a vehicle by which we assess what is natural, normal, or "appropriate" for any given gender. The degree to which a reader interprets what a particular representation means in a text, of course, depends on a consciousness marked by culture. Thus, the relationship between representation, culture, and the "reading of masculinity" will become central to this thesis.

This thesis will explore the representation of masculinity through 1920s American literature. It will investigate how patriarchy has not only led to a gender differentiation which looks to shape the consciousness of women (as "others" to men), but that it has equally created a "subject-other" differentiation between men themselves. Furthermore, I will examine how masculinity is "attained" through various displays of violence, ambivalence, heterosexuality, and sentimentality in the

works of Ernest Hemingway and Willa Cather. This examination is crucial within literary academic studies because, whereas past research has examined masculine (or phallogocentric) representation as a determinant apparatus affecting "feminine" discourse, experience, and autonomy, what must also be examined is the very construction of masculine discourse itself, and how masculine representation can perform ideologically for both sexes.

Since current research has developed gender as a social product construed for cultural and political meaning (Foucault 7; Irigaray 31, Butler 5), what scholarship must now address is the construct of masculinity reduced to its performative acts--"its mode of being"--as Smelik suggests in "The Carousel of Genders" (2). In other words, scholarship must examine how masculinity is conceived and attained through conventionally specific ways. As such, masculinity is something that must be displayed, or as Fiske asserts, "performed" (209). Thus, the masculine representations within Hemingway's *In Our Time* and *The Sun Also Rises*, where violence and ambivalence become markers of masculinity, and those of Cather's *O Pioneers!* and "Paul's Case", where "sentimentality" and "other" masculinities

act as a disruption to conventional ideals, will be used to address the importance of displaying masculinity. Because these texts seem to validate a masculine consciousness in the presence of their social climate (Dubbert 35), I will also examine how these representations play out within the cultural context in which they were written. I will do this by investigating how these representations adhere to, or disrupt, the masculine ideologies of the early twentieth-century. Since, as Kimmel writes, "Fantasies of western adventure, testing and proving manhood in the battlefield; celebrating the 'manly' in literature, music, art, and even going native in a Darwinian devolution of pure animality (155)," were the dominant masculine ideals at the turn of the century, my examination will probe the process of establishing "masculinity"--as well as why masculinity must be established in the first place. Before beginning this examination, however, it is important to signal how masculinity must be displayed or "performed" in order to be validated through society.

Performance and Gender

A few weeks ago, I had the opportunity of attending a local pre-season baseball game. Because it was a Saturday and I was on my way home from a local library, I had a couple of hours to spare and so decided to inch my way up to the wired fence, where many people by now were standing. As I was standing there, however, something struck me in a way that it hadn't before. I was watching the game like I always had, the players dressed, played, and acted as one would normally expect them to, but I began acknowledging something different about the game. At first I was at a loss, but then it hit me. Up until then, during the course of the week, I had been gathering material for the writing of this thesis--which dealt exclusively with the historical, cultural, and ideological representation of masculinity through the medium of literature. I had, thus, many circling notions regarding "masculinity," that made its way into my viewing of the game. As a result, I began to see the political structure of the game in a manner I hadn't before. It dawned on me that the act of masculinity was being microcosmically reproduced in front of my eyes; I had a focused illustration of "masculine politics." Similar to Fisher's

accounts of the Renaissance theater, where performances of gender on-stage became reflections of ideologies off-stage, I was witnessing a microcosm of a greater political phenomenon (Fisher 184). I was not only seeing the players play, but acknowledging the political structure of masculine "performance" as a whole. In witnessing this masculine "act," I observed a language being used--a behavior, a mentality, an emotional as well as physical appearance--that seemed inherent to the game. There was not only a physical performance going on in the field, but a conscious performance that enlisted an array of cultural and political ideals--so seemingly normal that they would appear invisible.

As many postmodern critics would contend, this performance of masculinity I witnessed on the field was in itself an embodiment of the current cultural ideals within American society (Kimmel 131). The discourse (the coach shouting to the pitcher, "Come on son, you're like a rock and a rock feels no pain"), the stance (always in a chest out position), the looks (infallible and aggressive), gestures (phallus-oriented), and names ("baby," "boy," "son"), were all indicative of masculine acts encoded with cultural meaning. As such, the player's masculinity was

being validated because of their performance of acceptable male behaviors. Their "agency," as composition theorists would say, was summoned up because of a keen relationship between their performance and the audience's acceptance of their performance; masculinity depends on an audience to be validated. The essence of masculinity, thus, emerges from a conscious display of culturally acceptable acts.

Yet, even before players are allowed to "perform" within any given arena, they must first be "players" (or agents) in order to play. Certainly, what qualifies a player to play is not only his physical abilities, but those behaviors and attitudes which must be exhibited within the game. In the same way, for the greater structure of gender politics within American society, there is a pre-qualification process that must be mastered before men can assert their "agency" within the validating act of performance. This pre-qualification process is a necessary part of masculine performance, as Butler contends, "part of the legitimizing of gender" (49). Seeing the baseball field as a metaphor for the greater stage of gender politics (which calls on men to perform their masculinity through culturally ideal ways (Pleck 71)), we acknowledge how conventional institutions create venues

for the validating of gender. In the process, a distinctive relationship between "spectator" and "performer" emerges. The performance of masculinity functions through the summoning up of a culturally identified "subjectivity" (a masculine "presence"), which, registered through an audience, gives it its validation (Butler 71). Stemming from my analogy of the baseball field as a cultural stage (to make an adaptation from Shakespeare), the performance of masculinity, or the necessary display of gender, is the imperative mask put out to a public to signify who one is as a means for social acceptance. The baseball field becomes a microcosmic illustration of how gender politics, ideology, and social acceptance works.

It will be my contention in this thesis, however, that literature is also a means by which we can reveal the performance of masculinity and the interplay between performance and audience. Certainly, through literature, we can examine how a text embodies conventional images of masculinity to be displayed for a readership. In this manner, the representation of masculinity becomes a measure of signification, a dissemination of conventional ideals to provide a reader what masculinity means.

Particularly in the framework of 1920s thought, "essentialist" assumptions of masculinity continually made their way into narratives (Kimmel 146). What a reader could identify with was a relegation of cultural ideals; the meaning of masculinity emerged in terms of mimesis-- the coming into being in the continuous interplay between a representation and the internalization of that representation (Knights 122). What this indicates is how narratives can form an "arena" by which masculinity can be validated through the reading process. Furthermore, narratives can be examined as extensions of political ideals, characteristic of the time in which they are produced. As Cornwall contends, "Multiple gendered identities, each of which depends on context and the specific and immediate relations between actors and audience, are often subversive to dominant forms" (10). Deborah Brandt adds in "Remember Writing, Remember Reading," that "readers are subjects in history, living social formations, rather than mere subjects of a single text" (51). In this regard, the examination of masculinity through a text gives us a way to study the social, cultural, and political aspects of masculinity. It also reveals how gendered assumptions are developed *through* the

reading process. As literary scholar Gregory Bredbeck suggests, "meaning is neither in the text nor the reader but rather is in the new position achieved by a dialectical confrontation of text and reader" (148).

With the representation of masculinity in American literature, we can analyze deductively how gender works through culture, history, and politics. The literature of the 1920s is particularly significant because, again, it represents a time of fluctuating gender norms and emerging "essentialist" (or "biological") gender definitions we still, in many respects, deal with today (Messner 311). Through this era, we get the culmination of the self-made man ethic (Kimmel 104), Freudian formulations on gender and sex-role identity (Kimmel 112), and the accommodation of masculinity as an "identity" to be sought after and achieved for men (Connell 17). Undeniably, by the time America reached the "roaring twenties," men had clear definitions of what it meant to be a man, and furthermore, through what means they could perform or validate their masculinity to their social surroundings (Brittan 17).

In literature, the literary representations of masculinity throughout this period similarly influenced, along with other things, what was expected of masculinity.

We see the issue of masculinity developed in the literary consciousness of such writers as Dos Passos, Lawrence, Fitzgerald, Cather, Hughes, and Hemingway; all, to some degree or another, find gender politics inescapable (Kimmel 215). Yet, among the many writers during the 1920's who seem to represent masculinity in a manner that both acknowledges and complicates the cultural gender conventions of their time, Ernest Hemingway and Willa Cather are two distinguished writers who consistently incorporate "gender issues" into their works. In the following chapters, I will show how these two writers, in particular, seem to represent a systematic yet complicated disruption to gendered ideals--all the while acknowledging the conventional and ideological presence of their time.

Furthermore, whereas some critics may contend that early twentieth-century narratives reveal fluctuation on gender norms due to social movements and the war (Kimmel 190), I contend that these two writers identify the fragmentation of gender in and of itself. Both Hemingway and Cather reveal how gender is construed socially and politically through particular contexts and historical times. It is these contexts which I will examine within their representations of masculinity. First, however, it

is imperative to analyze how conventional ideologies worked during the early twentieth-century, how they influenced the writers' representations of masculinity, and how reading conventional masculinity perpetuates conventional masculinist views. Since patriarchy has traditionally worked to maintain gender consciousness through law, ideology, and culture (Foucault 17), we must identify the very basis of 1920s gender assumptions--grounded on political motivations to create "difference," "hierarchy," and the seeing and reading of "gender."

CHAPTER TWO

LITERARY AND HISTORICAL CONTEXTS

Seeing and Reading Masculinity

To address 1920s American culture and its influences on the representations of masculinity within the works of Ernest Hemingway and Willa Cather, it is important to assert a relationship between reading, culture, and gender. Although there are many contemporary ethnographic reports which show the effects of reading and the shaping of gender norms (Heath 201), perhaps the most poignant example is in Josephine Young's study on adolescent boys. This study is particularly revealing because it shows how, from an early age, gender norms begin to inform the "reading of gender" within given texts.

In the study, Young asked certain questions to adolescent boys, aged 10-13, who were home-schooled and were limited in their interactions with the social world (through limited television watching). Young's analysis allowed her to see how gender perceptions were identified through the act of reading, as she asked certain questions regarding the male characters represented in the texts she gave (such as *Dune* (1965); *Where The Red Fern Grows*

(1961); *Stuart Little* (1945); *Willy the Wimp* (1984); *Tom Jefferson: A Boy in Colonial Days* (1939). In one series of questions, she probed how the boys were identifying with the male characters in the stories by the way in which the characters exhibited "normal" and "abnormal" masculine characteristics and behaviors (Young 323). In the study, as the boys read different types of masculinities, they exhibited resistance to the types of male characters who did not espouse traditionally masculine roles, such as "bravery" and "power" (Young 327). Furthermore, as the study continued, she revealed how many "gender violations" were determined by masculine "displays" which deviated from conventional norms (324). As such, the boys displayed clear definitions of how men should look, act, and think (which was as the opposite of how women should look, act, and think) and found themselves reluctant to approve of "other" forms of non-conventional masculinities (319). Young writes, "The boys' responses to my questions about masculine practices portrayed in books reflected the power of hegemonic discourses of masculinity to influence how 'boys are supposed to be.' The boys tended to support the male stereotypes portrayed in the books they read" (327). As a result, as the literary models Young presented her

subjects with moved away from what they believed were the culturally "normal" attributes of men, and into those assumed to be of "unmanly" men or "women" (as in the case with *Willy the Wimp* (1984)), they became uneasy with those models that didn't fit their perceived notions of how masculinity should be displayed, or performed (Young 328).

However, whereas Young's study may indicate that how we read gender is processed from an already culturally formed gender modality, because the boys determined that the conventional models they were presented with were what they were used to seeing in everyday texts (Young 331), it may also suggest that reading creates and maintains conventional views of gender. Reading conventional masculinity perpetuates conventional ways of seeing and acknowledging masculinity. What Young surmised was an apparent positioning from the reader towards the text, as the text constructed an arena by which conventional masculinity could be determined. In this manner, the texts presented what Ben Knights examines in *Writing Masculinities: Male Narratives in Twentieth Century Fiction*: "narratives which direct attention to the forms and conventions out of which stories are built and according to which they are told and exchanged" (127). As

the study went on, Young found that the relationship between reader and text continually shifted as the boys reacted to the types of literary prompts they were used to seeing men portrayed with in stories, and thus interpreted "new" stories in the same gendered way they had with previous ones (329).

Young's report reveals that a text can establish or disrupt ideological suppositions. Through the act of reading, cultural messages are disseminated within a text, and subsequently, inform the reader's reading of gender. By Young's accounts, the children began to think of how boys *should* act and what proper roles men *should* have by both the literary prompts given to them and those they had been accustomed to reading. As such, as Knights claims, "the reading or studying of fictions is one mode of the daily business of negotiating and warranting an identity" (137). Similarly, in McCormick's studies on the process of reading and interpreting gender, she suggests that in the schematic procession of "reading texts," people will begin identifying themselves through a sex-typed manner, "conforming to their culture's definitions of masculinity and femininity" (487). These formulations reveal how the identification of masculinity is determined through an

interplay between the reader and the masculine "subject" seen in a text. In the case of the boys reading masculinity in stories, their shaping of masculinity is based on both an acknowledgment of the cultural ideals of society (the study was conducted in 2000), as well as their own reinforcement of those cultural ideals through the reading process (Young 329). The way in which "masculinity" emerges through the act of reading is then one situated on the necessary identification of conventional masculinity, as represented in a text. In other words, much like my baseball example, the text can become an "arena" by which masculinity can be determined and validated by a reader (as the audience). Simultaneously, masculinity can be derived through a representation a reader identifies with and reinforces from one text to the next. As Knight reveals in his studies, "the construction of the male reader and of the male as subject arrives through the discourse of texts" (122). He further adds:

A narrative, even when it is written, or, for that matter read-in isolation, is a form of social exchange. It takes place between parties to the narrative exchange, it establishes an environment for

the events, it names heroes and villains, typifies the modes of personality appropriate to the different actors in the tale, and designates certain kinds of actions, responsibilities and outcomes. (124)

Both Young's and Knight's studies reveal that not only can masculinity be constructed through the reading process, but that the reader is as well constructed by the internalization of literary masculine representations. As such, conventional masculine narratives can be processed as normative for all (Knights 127). Masculine stories, which carry ideological meaning to a readership, can enhance individual consciousness with a collective significance. As Knights claims: "Masculine identities and (stereo)typical male ways of being and acting are constantly reinforced and re-enacted through social practices of communication among which narratives both oral and written, figure prominently" (125). Masculinity, then, is presented as a stable "sign" that exists through the interplay of ideology and consciousness within the reading process. The development of this "gendered lens" functions as an identification process between the reader and the text. The performance of masculinity creates the

"arena" by which identification can be achieved and validated through the act of reading. Knights writes:

Our relationship with a text can be seen as operating on two levels. On one level the text is mimetic. At another level it is performative, conjuring up mental events which to some degree happen every time the text is read. It is broadly the case that the dominant traditions in Western Literature have addressed the reader on the understanding that the normal position was that of being a male, as an implicit appeal for masculine solidarity. In as much as masculinity too is a rhetorical construct, our choice of masculinities has been limited by the narratives addressed to us. (127)

Thus, the political and ideological nature implicit in the reading process provides a discursive "place" by which representations of gender carry social, psychological, and cultural meaning. Berlin's studies on traditional and historical reading models reveals, similarly, the ideological inevitability within texts-- intent on establishing "hegemonic" goals (*Rhetoric and Reality* 479). The term "hegemony," in this case, refers to a process, coined by Antonio Gramsci and later elaborated

by Louis Althusser, by which the political ideals of those in power are deemed relevant and normal for all. Therefore, the representation of masculinity as being an "obvious" and "timeless truth," as defined by social conventions, "allow[s] people to make sense of themselves and the world in ways which reinforce and perpetuate the dominant power relations of society" (Roger Webster 63). In *Rhetoric and Reality*, Berlin writes, "Ideology always carries with it strong social endorsement, so that *what we take to exist, to have value, and to be possible, seems necessary, normal, and inevitable in the nature of things*" (479). Further regarding the types of textual ideologies that have been traditionally presented to students in literary texts, he writes that "the student is being indoctrinated in a basic epistemology, usually the one held by society's dominant class, the group with the most power" (2). Berlin's studies, which examines the role of literature and rhetoric throughout the nineteenth- and twentieth-centuries, provides a further realization of how "masculine narratives" can appropriate conventionally gendered identifications, intent on affecting what we read and how we read.

Yet, although literary scholars have for some time now revealed the inevitable ideological presence within literary texts, historical scholars have also found an interest in the way reading can perpetuate conscious and subconscious gender ideals in the psyche of a reader. In "reading" masculinity, historicist scholar R.W. Connell declares, "Interpretations of maleness, manhood or masculinity are not neutral, but rather all such attributions and labels have political entailments" (*Masculinities* 10). It is these "political entailments," attached to masculinity, which must be examined for their effects on a readership. Particularly for the audiences of the 1920s, literature was imbedded with conventional gender ideals that, as historical scholars reveal, were a by-product of their political context (Kimmel 127). The literature of the 1920s was a cultural vehicle able to disseminate conventional information. As Andrea Cornwall contends, 1920s masculine narratives act as "grand narratives of legitimation which purport to generate 'truths' about the human condition [although] fail[ing] to embrace the complexity of local conditions" (27). To examine this aspect further, however, we must dive into the exact historical context of the 1920s.

Masculinity in the 1920s

Historical examinations probing the concept of masculinity during the 1920s in the U.S. reveal a culture that was in a state of flux while at the same time proposing a "real" masculinity in the consciousness of men. Looking through magazines, newspapers, radio, political slogans, religious pamphlets, and other media, Michael Kimmel reveals a culture intent on defining what it meant to be a man, and, subsequently, how a man must act, think, and behave within 1920s society (39). As such, as twentieth-century emerged, the concept of male roles were greatly shaped by very ideological and political ideals. As one masculine ideal, and as the Industrialization of society continued and extended through the first World War, there was a sense of strength and power associated with the male being. To be a man meant to be strong, rugged, fearless, and heterosexual (Kimmel 144,145). The literary texts of the time also portrayed this masculine ideal by accrediting the rational, powerful, independent, and muscular masculinity into the consciousness of the reader. As Kimmel notes, "proving manhood on the battlefield; celebrating the manly in literature, music and art--these were the dominant

themes of masculinist literature at the turn of the century" (155). What this reality shows is how literature provided a basis by which cultural ideals were distributed into a readership. This furthermore created a relationship between reader and text, intent on providing a specific way of reading masculinity based on conventional ideals. These conventional ideals, of course, were ones which required that there be a masculinity to be "attained." As Kimmel asserts, "Masculinity was something that had to be constantly demonstrated, the attainment of which was forever in question—lest man be undone by a perception of being too feminine" (120).

The fact that femininity was presented as a constant threat and as an antithesis of masculinity was the means by which masculinity would be kept in check through 1920s patriarchal discourses. On one level, the feminine-masculine polarity seemed to maintain the rigid hierarchical gender structure which patriarchal ideology benefited from. On the another level, it was the means by which other men would be able to reinforce masculine attributes in themselves and with each other. As Pleck contends:

In addition to hierarchy over women, men created hierarchies and rankings amongst themselves according to the criteria of 'masculinity.' Men at each rank of masculinity compete with each other, with whatever resources they have, for the different payoffs that patriarchy allows men. (23)

Of course, the payoffs that the performance of masculinity gave men was limited to only a possible visual validation of their "gender." Studies regarding the masculinities of "other" men, who would constitute a minority in any shape or form, reveal that they are limited in the "payoffs" that patriarchy can award them (Hooks 174). The validation of masculinity for these men are therefore more dependent on other social/political taxonomies which delineate identity and power. The polarization between masculinity and femininity during the 1920s, however, established a means by which visible signs of masculinity could be determined across more of a social and ethnic spectrum. In this manner, homosexuality, or the determined "feminizing" of men, became the antithesis of what masculinity curtailed within the discourses of the 1920s (Pleck 25). "From this perspective," Cornwall adds, "idealized masculinity is not necessarily just about men; it is not

necessarily just about relations between the sexes either. Rather, it is part of a system for producing difference" (27).

It is in the act of producing "difference" between women and men that masculinity will be defined within the essentialist claims of 1920s discourse. Ironically, this postulation maintained that masculinity was in itself nothing without a feminine polar. Masculinity was thus only defined through its antithesis to femininity and relied on its differentiation from it in order to attain an "identity." For this matter, homosexuality was an "abnormal" phenomenon because it posed a threat, through its non-conformity and "meshing" quality, towards conventional idealizations of masculinity. Particularly during the early twentieth-century, as Kimmel writes:

Homosexuality hovered like a specter over anxious parents, [...] tabloid newspapers terrified and titillated their readers with stories of degenerate child molesters who committed acts of unspeakable depravity; the closet was hastily built, and gay men immediately pushed into it. (203, 204)

This fear of homosexuality, which becomes such an issue within men's studies still today (Connell 11), went so far

during these emerging stages of the American twentieth-century that it focused predominantly on men who did not achieve those physical appearances that were perceived as "manly." Thereby, such things as frailty, weakness, meticulousness, or even having too much of a "fair complexion," became a basis by which a man's masculinity could be questioned (Messner 61). The underlying ideology of this heterosexual persistency, of course, was not one tied to a concern of "sexuality" but one of power. Men as "subjects" could not attain positions of "objectivity," or possess attributes of feminine "inferiority" while being perceived as "superior." Homosexuality, hence, became a threat because of its meshing of a "necessary" masculine-feminine binary model (Sedgwick 11). The identity-sexuality comparison was propagandized through all sorts of media in order to create a patriarchally-friendly vision of masculinity, for political and convenient reasons (Pleck 27).

Masculinity, thus, required proof, and proof required "serious effort, whether at the baseball park, the gymnasium, or sitting down to read Tarzan or a good western novel" (Kimmel 120). Novels, by this account, became a means by which "real" masculinity could be seen

and socially identified with. Tarzan (1913) and the new western hero all posited a cultural meaning of masculinity, as Kimmel declares, "Suddenly, books about the urban 'jungle' or 'wilderness' appeared, which allowed men to experience manly risk and excitement without ever leaving the city" (120). The element of "without leaving the city" is particularly revealing in this passage since, from the nineteenth-century to the twentieth-century, masculine ideals tied to work and "land" changed (Pleck 111). Now, with the clear establishment of the Industrial Age, masculinity had to be proven beyond the attributes once associated through a work ethic or attaining "land." In this manner, social clubs and other arenas began to emerge, providing a place where masculinity could be "proven" in order to attain cultural validity (Pleck 113).

As the structuring of masculinity moved off the work-ethic mentality of the late nineteenth-century and into the urban structure of the twentieth, new forms or "arenas" were incepted to legitimize masculinity through performance. As such, the Boy Scouts and the YMCA were introduced as patriarchal arenas by which boys could become "real men," and where masculinity could be saved from the newly feared "feminization effects" of a rising

feminist consciousness (Dubbert 18, Hantover 289). The Boy Scouts, in particular, carried a moralistic as well as essentialist concern: giving boys "the opportunity to perform normatively appropriate male behaviors" (Hantover 288). The appropriate male behaviors, of course, as we have seen, regarded that boys be structured through the ideological identifications of being strong, brave, independent, competitive and compulsively heterosexual. The YMCA also established itself as an arena by which boys and men could be "rescued" from a perceived feminization in culture, and where manly (violent and aggressive) sports and "spiritual fostering" could shield off any disruption to a necessary masculine-feminine differentiation (Hantover 290). As Kimmel declares, "the YMCA wanted to create a manly boy" (167). The threat of feminization did not just affect the emergence of social institutions, however, but emerged as a new formulation within religious ideology.

During the early twentieth-century there developed a realization that most church-goers were women (Kimmel 176). This fact created an anxiety for pastors and religious clergy (all men, of course) to shield religion from what they saw as a feminine emergence within the

church. Adding to this, the "new" examinations of Elizabeth Stanton and other feminists (Fuller, Gage, Grimke) began re-assessing the Bible beyond traditionally male interpretations (Donovan 37). With this threat, then, emerged a "masculinization of Christianity," which re-interpreted the once frail, meek, and gentle Christ to be one of strength, autonomy, and ruggedness (Kimmel 176). With such literary dissemination as: *The Manly Christ* (1904) and *The Masculine Power of Christ* (1912), these re-masculinizing Jesus books "portrayed Jesus as a brawny carpenter, whose manly resolve challenged the idolaters, kicked the money changers out of the temple and confronted the most powerful imperium ever assembled" (Kimmel 177).

Therefore, in every aspect of society, a clear effort was being made to provide a cultural gender definition by which people could identify with. Even in terms of gender formation during the early stages of life, clothes became color "coded" between boys and girls. There were now colors for boys and girls which, ironically, determined pink for boys and blue for girls, since pink seemed the "obvious" variation of red which was seen as dominant and "manly" (Kimmel 160). In the magazine "The Infants Department" (1918) we see illustrations of pink clothed

boys and blue clothed girls as coded definitions of a normative gender order (Kimmel 160). From a social, political, and religious manner, the early twentieth-century began evolving a particular interest in espousing clearly definable gender norms and expectations, while simultaneously creating "arenas" by which those expectations could be accomplished.

In this formulation, however, it is interesting how patriarchal power does not necessarily correlate itself to men or guarantee them "agency," but instead, attaches itself to the process of masculine performance and the seeking of legitimization. Power is thus a means of attempting autonomy through conventional practices and politically recognizable acts. This is certainly not to say that men have not had a political advantage over women awarded to them historically, but that this "advantage" is determined through social tasks that, in the end, cannot be attained by many. In fact, even in the legitimization of masculinity, the male is not awarded a lifetime membership. Masculinity depends on a continual set of acts and cultural demonstrations. As Kimmel writes of the 1920s, "whereas manhood could be achieved, it could also be lost; it was not simply a quality that resulted

naturally and inevitably from one's sex" (124). What this reality suggests is that, whereas femininity seemed as something constant by the cultural standards of the 1920s, masculinity had to be continually proven in order to "exist" within the cultural climate of American gender politics. As Rousseau states in *Emile*, "Men are male only part of the time, women are female always" (Pleck 1). Masculinity during the 1920s, thus, could be attained only through specific traits and attitudes, specific behaviors and perspectives. If men expressed these attitudes, traits, and behaviors, they could be certain that they were "real men" in the eyes of their culture. If a man failed to express these traits, however, he was in danger of becoming a feminized male, or an "other," as Simone de Beauvoir would say (Kimmel 206). With this formulation, men had to be the very antithesis of what was presumed to be feminine, regardless of the fact that these formulations were in themselves being constructed as they went along.

Beyond these social postulations, however, was also a dissemination of psychological theories which delineated gender along patriarchal ideals. Most influentially, Sigmund Freud developed theories on gender differences

that had, at its basis, patriarchal identifications and phallo-centric determinations (*Three Essays on Sexuality*, 1905). As Kimmel notes: "Freudian assumptions grounded the male sex role--a static, a-historical container of attitudes, behaviors, and values that are appropriate to men and defined masculine behavior" (Kimmel 210). Kimmel adds, "Masculinity was now understood to be learned through a successful mastery of a variety of props" (210). As one of these "mastery of props," as Kimmel contends, was the psychological development of the male through the infamous Oedipus complex. As such, masculine sex-role normality was developed through a distancing from the maternal figure (the mother) and later identification with the father (Connell 10). Deviation from this formula would result, according to Freud, to an "arrested development" in the psyche of the (male) individual, and where men would be susceptible to crime, abnormal psychosis, or homosexuality (Connell 11). Freud's early theories were thus intent on working within a patriarchally established gender system which placed men on one end of the gender spectrum while women as an "other." By 1926, Carl Jung also developed a psychological analysis similar to Freud's, although promulgating a "persona" and an "anima"

which shifted through states of consciousness and sub-consciousness (Connell 12). While both of these "scientific" formulations influenced the discourse of the 1920s, it was particularly Freud's that had a wide social effect (Connell 16). Many of his revelations, although ironically disrupting certain ideals of traditional masculinist theory, seemed to validate the ideological binary perceptions of gender, now through science. As such, his theories infiltrated the social discourses of the 1920s and developed "masculinity" as not only a set of repetitive acts, but as a marker of "normal" sex-role identity (Connell 16; Brittan 15). Masculinity was now seen as the quantifiable object of social reality, whereas femininity, according to Freud, elapsed into the default precipices of human psychology. Although Freud himself revisited these formulations later on and revised many of his early hypotheses, it essentially perpetuated a psychological concern for the necessary attainment of masculinity. Because of Freud, masculinity was determined on a psychological as well as political basis, which together maintained and perpetuated conventional ways of looking at gender.

The effects of these cultural, political, religious, and psychological idealizations, of course, created certain ramifications within 1920s society. For one thing, masculinity was attainable by only *some* men and, at times, through very dire costs. By accepting the necessary displays of masculinity, men had to willingly face the consequences for those displays. Violence and the war are two examples which will be discussed in the following chapter. Furthermore, the cultural climate of the 1920s was intent on depicting one form of masculinity that negated countless of others. Men of color, gay men, and other minorities were limited to their "achieving" conventional masculinity (Kimmel 12). Masculinity was thus erected, for many men, as a form of struggle. In order for a man to be a man, he had to attain the visual and performative vestiges of conventional masculinity, regardless if those vestiges were in conflict with his own identification of self. Masculinity, from this viewpoint, was developed as a mask (Foucault, *History of Sexuality* Vol.3).

Yet, this "mask," which displayed the conventional gender ideals of the 1920s, emerged multiple paradoxes. As one main paradox, the mask was not real. As such, what is

attained through the performance of masculinity (the putting on of the social mask) is but the performance itself. Although one could perform the social ideals of masculinity, as in the case of the 1920s, there is still an interior existence that must be dealt with. In other words, one can attempt to create themselves by socially ascribed roles, but one can never escape who one is, whether it be determined by economic status, ethnicity, language, or sexuality. This therefore represents not only a paradox but a struggle of identity; it is a struggle between one's own identification of self, and the identity that must be displayed in order to be socially and politically acceptable. In the following chapters, this "struggle" finds itself within the narratives of Ernest Hemingway and Willa Cather, revealing how 1920s ideologies of "masculinity" become both internalized and complicated within their literary texts.

CHAPTER THREE

ERNEST HEMINGWAY

Hemingway's Conventional Displays

Certainly as one of the major American writers who, as Deborah Modellmog suggests, has a "cultural image as a man's man" (240), or as Nancy Comley and Robert Scholes assert was an "appropriately patriarchal figure" (3), Ernest Hemingway captured the "essence of masculinity" as it was perceived during the 1920s (Kimmel 214). His representation of the masculine virtues of bravery, violence, heroism and, ultimately, ambivalence, all lent themselves to conventional reader/performance identifications of masculinity during his time. The masculine characteristics he represents in his narratives--and his narratives deal almost exclusively with masculine subjects--become markers of 1920s essentialist ideology (Connell 139). Of course, as I will suggest throughout this chapter, these are idealistic representations which even Hemingway acknowledged had many frailties and paradoxes. Yet, the conscious acknowledgment of masculinity having to function through these conventional roles reveals how Hemingway accommodates them into his

narratives and provides a codified process by which readers can see masculinity in his texts.

Another aspect of Hemingway's "masculinist" representations, furthermore, is the political context his narratives emerge from. As such, war-time violence, as one of his chief arenas, becomes a vehicle for masculine validation. As Suzanne Hatty writes, "In the early decades of the twentieth-century, World War I provided many men with a socially approved masculine role. Although considerable numbers of men suffered from the traumas of war, there was a general optimism about the prospects for the economy" (136). Therefore, what we see in *In Our Time* and *The Sun Also Rises* is the embodiment of violence as an arena for masculine legitimization. Other "arenas" that will serve to perform masculinity are Hemingway's depiction of bullfights, sexualities, and initiation rituals (Young, Phillip 97). As a result, some scholars regard these violent depictions as expected social representations, reminiscent of Hemingway's time (Kauffman 10, Kimmel 213). The depiction of violence attached to masculinity could be seen as an inevitable aspect of the Hemingway text, since it was both a reality of the time and a necessity to attain masculine agency (Hatty 137).

Yet, to regard the Hemingway narrative as simply a consequence of the war seems to overlook the other dynamics which surface in the texts. There are other implications within the use of violence to characterize masculinity, which deal with the psychological nature of men's lives during the 1920s. Again, we revisit the postulations of Freudian theory which dictated a violent nature as an "essence" of masculine psychology (Connell 27). In the text *In Our Time*, Hemingway presents continual images of violence to reveal his masculine characters. The death of the Indian father within "Indian Camp" (18); the sudden violent attempt by the protagonist to "re-arrange" his environment in "The Doctor and His Wife" (25); the importance of revealing one's violent existence within "The Battler" (60); the execution of Sam Cardinella in the chapter 15 vignette (143), and the successive vignettes that reveal the characters' place in a world full of futile acts of violence and destruction (63, 78, 95, 113, 131), all provide "violence" as a physical and psychic reality with which the male characters had to function.

Similarly, in *The Sun Also Rises*, during the pivotal scenes where the characters are watching the bulls, there

is a mindset, a reality, that violence is not only a part of masculinity, but again, an ideal of masculinity. The story, which follows the lost paths of Jake Barnes, Cohn, and the Lady Brett Ashley, acts as a deposition of the fragmented culture of the 1920s, and where sustenance, among other things, centers on performance. Ideologically, this is represented through repetitive insistences of becoming an "aficionado" to the act of bullfighting and allowing an initiation into the violent world of conventional masculinity (*The Sun Also Rises* 136). In this manner, the ideal of "aficionado" becomes a means of representing masculinity as a performance feature (Hatty 136). Violence becomes a marketable aspect in the Hemingway text, that distinguishes between conventional masculinity and, as we will see later on, "other" masculinities which find themselves at a loss both politically and socially within 1920s gender conventions.

Hemingway's image of the bullring and the violent nature of that "arena" thus distinguishes a place where one could see masculinity performed and validated. This brings us again to the performance-spectator relationship upon which masculinity depends. As Thomas Strychacz writes, "The bullring accentuates the arena by which

masculinity can be formed and legitimized before an audience, whether it be real or imagined" (46). In Chapter XI of *In Our Time*, Hemingway writes:

The crowd shouted all the time and threw pieces of bread down into the ring, then cushions and leather wine bottles, keeping in whistling and yelling. Finally the bull was too tired from so much bad sticking and folded his knees and lay down and one of the cuadrilla leaned out over his neck and killed him with the puntillo. The crowd came over the barrera and around the torero and two men grabbed him and held him and someone cut off his pigtail and was waving it and a kid grabbed it and ran away with it. (95)

The violent act of killing a bull is a means to validate the matador's masculinity to the crowd. The audience, in this regard, is extremely important because without them there would be no need to prove oneself, and therefore the performance act would be futile. Furthermore, the age of the matador, being a "kid," reflects on how the initiation of masculinity attains a cultural value, similar to the American ideals found in Pleck's analysis of 1920s gender convention. The bullring becomes a literary microcosm of

the various social institutions (YMCA, Boy Scouts, etc.) meant to provide masculinity a place where it could be "acknowledged" (Pleck 25). As such, we see the acknowledgment of masculine performance rewarded with the kid's pigtail being cut off (95). The pigtail is an interesting feature because it relates to the reinforcement of masculinity being at odds with femininity, symbolized with the long/short hair dichotomy. Also, the fact that the kid, as well as the other matadors in this sequence, are nameless, except for Villata, suggests how this "arena" can serve for any boy within the initiation of masculinity; the namelessness of the characters suggests universality.

Similarly, in *The Sun Also Rises*, the bullfight is a performative marker in determining masculinity. At a time when the characters are in Spain during the festival season of the bullfights, the characters of Jake, Bill, and Cohn attest their masculinity by their ability to participate in the festivity (163). Remarking over the brute violence of the sport, Bill, who had witnessed many bullfights before, asks Robert Cohn (who had never witnessed one) if he could stand it. Cohn's reply is: "I'm not worried about how I'll stand it. I'm only afraid I may

be bored" (165). The fact that later in the story Cohn is affected by the bullfight (171), however, reveals how Bill's question was not about whether Cohn could watch the sport or not, but whether he would attest his masculinity in becoming a "spectator." Bill's question serves to reinforce the concept of performance for performance's sake, as well as to reinforce the dialectical relationship between spectator and performer in the legitimization of "masculinity."

The determination of masculine performance further continues with the character of Cohn in the story, because he does not understand the dynamics of "appropriate masculine behavior," whether it be sexually, socially, or symbolically (28,164,182,197). In the context of the bullring and the masculine presence that emerges through the bullring, he is not an "aficionado" (136). Cohn's presence in the novel illustrates a genteel tradition of prior decades, reflected through a "superiority" (141) which now clashes with the 1920s rugged individualism imbricated throughout the Hemingway text (Kimmel 215). Being an "aficionado," then, or accepting the ideal of violence through the bullring, creates the difference between Bill and Cohn in *The Sun Also Rises*; the former

attains the characteristics of being an "aficionado" while the latter disdains it.

Therefore, what we see in *The Sun Also Rises* is the importance of performing masculinity for the legitimization of conventional gender identity, as well as for the distinguishing of one's identity from "others." This is also represented with the bullfight events of Pedro the bullfighter (176,182,184). As Connell writes, "Violence is not just an expression; it is a part of the process that divides different masculinities from each other" (198). Hemingway, through the bullring, reveals the acknowledgment that gender politics is a real condition in which masculinities get placed. The fact, furthermore, that Hemingway positions himself with the conventional Bill (120, 132) rather than Cohn (198), reveals how the association and reinforcement of masculinity develops from an acknowledgment of conventional ideals to signify one's own masculinity.

The "agency" of masculinity, thus, comes through a process of exchange: men perform their gender to a social audience which legitimizes their "masculinity." As Strychacz suggests within his investigations of Hemingway's bullrings, "Acting as an agent of legitimation

for ritual gesture made in the ring, the audience assimilates all action to performance and invests performance with value" (Strychacz 46). Whether the performance itself creates an interior (psychological) masculine realization is not what is important. What is important is the performance of masculinity for performance's sake. The kid bullfighter, in *In Our Time*, acknowledges that "[he is] not really a good bullfighter" (95). What this proves is that the artifice of masculinity is but a show that has to be proven with and to an "audience," and that an audience is necessary to validate it.

In the story "The Battler" from *In Our Time*, we similarly see the visualization of the character's wounds (marks of violence) as a means to validate masculinity. Hemingway writes:

Nick rubbed his eye. There was a big bump coming up. He touched the bump over his eye with his fingers. 'Oh, well, it was only a black eye.' 'You're a tough one, aren't you [said Ad]?' 'You got to be tough,' Nick said. The man looked at Nick and smiled. In the firelight Nick saw that his face was misshapen. His nose was sunken, his eyes were slits, [. . .] he had

only one ear. 'Look here!,' the man took off his hat, 'Ever see one like that?' 'No,' said Nick. 'I could take it.' (55)

When compared to the character of Francis in the story, who also has visible marks that are "acknowledged" by the other characters (62), this scene provides a basis by which violence legitimizes masculinity. The fact again that Ad (who is older than Nick) acknowledges Nick's toughness and "smiles," reveals an initiation into masculinity which mirrors the social conventions of 1920s masculine politics (Messner 129). The one seeking validation of masculinity is Nick, who is young and willing to create an "agency" through the establishing and acknowledgment of conventional ideals. As Strychacz contends, "In story after story of *In Our Time*, Hemingway has demonstrated (however ironically) that manhood corresponds with being seen as a man" (33). Hatty adds, over the social-individual gender relationship, "Only the continual cultural renewal of opportunities to demonstrate masculinity forestalls a serious crisis at the individual and social level" (137). Therefore, both Strychacz and Hatty (and the Hemingway text taken at its surface) give the impression that, not only are conventional displays of

masculinity an inescapable social reality, but that it becomes the only means of masculine realization. Seeing that Hemingway represents conventional ideals of manhood within his literature, one can contend that these performances are necessary and unavoidable in the legitimization of masculinity. But are they? How does Hemingway actually idealize these conventional "practices?"

The Costs of Performance

Although scholars have proposed that Hemingway's representation of masculinity is a configuration of all the ideals of the early twentieth-century (Kimmel 209), it is certainly not without problems. I have already described what some of the ideals of the twentieth-century were in the previous chapter, and certainly the Hemingway text in many regards develops these ideologies within its literature. Yet, at the subtext of Hemingway's works, particularly within *The Sun Also Rises* and *In Our Time*, there lies a masculinity at odds with the very ideals of patriarchal ideology. It is this struggle between the "ideal" and what becomes "reality" which surfaces in the Hemingway text, as characters become wounded because of

their masculinity. Interestingly enough, just as Hemingway seems to be celebrating conventional displays of masculinity, the very nature that is idealized in his writing becomes a source of suffocation. Within *In Our Time* and *The Sun Also Rises*, the physical, sexual, and psychological maiming of the individual is at a cost of the very violent nature that is at once glorified.

Within *In Our Time*, the way in which the characters in "The Battler" prove masculinity, by revealing it through "scars," depict the futility and yet fragility of masculinity (58). Although Bugs and Ad in "The Battler" provide evidence of masculinity through scars, they are nevertheless faced with the "consequences" of their masculine displays, represented through the loss of freedom (61), failed relationships (61), and their loss of sanity (57). The successive stories within *In Our Time* further provide masculinity through demonstrations amongst "a crowd," but beyond these "demonstrations," they uncover nothing but the performance itself. In other words, the characters arrive at a loss of who they are beyond the means of their actions, or performances. In "Soldiers Home", the character of Krebs comes back to a world he is now alien to (72). His utterance "I don't love anybody" is

at once an act of despair as one of maiming (76). The masculine arena that was at once promoted in the beginning of *In Our Time* (58), is now turned, within the very text, into one of loss. Ironically, in the attaining of gender legitimization within *In Our Time*, one loses about everything else (126). In the displaying of masculine ideals within the text, the characters come up with nothing but their immediate acts and superficial demonstrations. Neither Krebs, Bugs, nor Nick Adams himself come away with any realization of themselves; on the contrary, they seem to lose themselves within their masculine demonstrations (58,62).

Similarly, in *The Sun Also Rises*, although Jake admonishes masculine ideals through his attraction to the Lady Brett Ashley (23) and his being an "aficionado" of bullfighting (169), he is at once unable to attain them. Physically, sexually, and symbolically, Jake is unable to function with or contain the Lady Brett Ashley; he is a spectator in the audience of male peers and cannot be anything but a spectator. Being unable to perform sexually (37), he is castrated (in a reversal of contemporary Freudian theory) not because of his disassociation with patriarchal conventions, but because of his association

with them. Ironically, the attaining of his status in the novel--as a man who has fought in the war and is an "aficionado"--are the very things that stagnate him (109). His castration as the result of a "war wound" paradoxically makes him (from a cultural standpoint) and does not make him (from a psychological and sexual standpoint) a "man" (34). As such, Jake admires the masculine ideals of sex, violence, and war, but, in the process of attaining these ideals, finds them futile in establishing his genuine identity (251). Sexually maimed, Jake is unable to fulfill his desires for Brett and becomes an "other" within the sexual games of competing males who desire and eventually attain Lady Brett Ashley (142,166,195).

What Jake's character shows is that idealizations and performances of conventional masculinity are not only problematic, but in the end, are futile and bittersweet. When compared to Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms*, when the character Frederick Henry is roasting ants and contemplating the futility of violence, he is at once stricken and victimized by the very element which marks his identity within the novel--violence (241). The epiphany that Frederick makes, of course, relates to the

political process by which men's bodies become attached to the governing patriarchal structures which rule, regulate, and benefit from "masculinity." As such, patriarchy determines masculinity only through specific acts (such as in fighting in a war) to provide a social title men can be branded with. This "title," however, provides only a political identification. Although masculinity insinuates power, it is illusive since men become pawns themselves within the process. Thus, the displaying of masculinity provides no true benefit beyond those for "identification" purposes and results many times in dire consequences. We see this represented through Hemingway's continual images of death, which provides the ultimate cost of masculine display.

In *In Our Time* Hemingway writes:

Two Austrian dead lay in the rubble in the shade of the house. Up the street were other dead. Things were getting forward in the town. It was going well. Stretcher bearers would be along any time now. Nick turned his head carefully and looked at Rinaldi. 'Senta Rinaldi. Senta. You and me we've made a separate peace.' Rinaldi lay still in the sun breathing with difficulty. 'Not patriots.' Nick

turned his head carefully away smiling with difficulty. Rinaldi was a disappointing audience.(63)

In this scene, after much depiction of masculinity constructed through violence, the results of such an ideal emerges. At a moment when Nick finds some solace in the separate peace he has found with Rinaldi, Rinaldi is no longer there to take part in it. The irony here is that the violent show of manhood gives no real reward to the characters beyond those which are socially and politically marked. Certainly, violence can give a male the perception of masculinity, but it is in itself nothing beyond that perception. In *A Farewell to Arms*, the character of Rinaldi is further conceptualized through a violence that ends in loss (216), repression (92), ambivalence (237), and ultimately death (331).

In *The Sun Also Rises* we also get the results of violence during the very scenes where the bullfight is celebrated. When two matadors get killed, the waiter in the novel asserts that the matadors were "badly cogido [. . .] all for sport, all for pleasure" (201). The satirical tone of his remark, when placed in context of the scene, reveals how the element of being an "aficionado" is in itself a problematic construct; it is

only an idealistic way of being. In reality, the pleasure of being a matador lies only in the performance of being one, and thus is isolated in an "act" (199). Furthermore, after the scene where Jake admonishes his "aficionadoness", he is asked by the waiter what he thinks of the killing. He asserts, "I don't know" (201), then later, "It was bad" (202). What we see in this passage is the realization of the "costs" catching up to the ideal; the masculine "agency," which is at once promised through the display of violence, results in dire consequences.

The glory and later consequence of violence as a cultural ideal, furthermore, depict the paradoxical struggle that exists at the subtext of Hemingway's works. While his main characters attain somewhat of an agency by the standards of conventional ideology, they, as the other men in both *In our Time* and *The Sun Also Rises*, ironically are suffocated, wounded, maimed, and lost because of it. The relationship between reality and ideal, thus, distinguishes not reality, but a means for an "identification" that is destined for doom. Who the male is outside of violence is left as an enigma to Hemingway's characters. In "Soldier's Home," Hemingway writes: "He thought about France and then he began to think about

Germany. On the whole he had liked Germany better. He did not want to leave Germany. He did not want to come home" (72). What we notice in this passage is how Krebs, who is now at home, longs for the "arena" which provided him an identity--"a place" (71). His awkwardness, ambivalence, and desolation within an environment that no longer provides him that identity, now creates an anxiety and "lostness" to his character (74). Therefore, what emerges through the act of violence--the performance of masculinity--is but an artifice. It has significance and "power" only while it is being performed. Violence in the Hemingway text acts paradoxically as an element that, while it can distinguish masculinity, can extinguish it as well. Hemingway represents masculine conventions to complicate them through a realization of what they are and what they mean when not in "play," and by doing so, he presents a struggle between the ideals of patriarchal discourses and the realities they produce.

Homosocial Subtexts

Yet, violence is not the only element that Hemingway "complicates" within his representation of masculinity. What similarly becomes a means of "struggle" in his texts

are the sexual nature of men's lives, conceptualized through myth, politics, and ideology (Moddelmorg 240). As such, we see sexuality become a consistent concern for Hemingway, as he complicates conventional masculine ideologies tied to heterosexuality. Although the masculine discourses of the 1920s sought to create "femininity" and "homosexuality" as the antithesis of masculinity (Kimmel 207, Butler 16), Hemingway complicates the traditional masculine-heterosexual relationship and introduces a fluctuation within these social norms. A distinguishing aspect of the Hemingway text is how it proposes celebrations of homoeroticism all the while contained within 1920s ideology. Whereas many scholars have (purposely) ignored this aspect in the past (Rovit 189), as Moddlemorg writes: "with the release of Hemingway's private manuscripts, such as *The Garden of Eden* and his personal letters, has there been a widespread scholarly examination [. . .] to confront themes of homosexuality, perversion, and androgyny [in his texts]" (240).

Current investigations dealing with Hemingway's use of homoeroticism, however, has created some uneasiness among Hemingway scholars. As Moddlemog contends, "there is

growing anxiety among Hemingway admirers that the Hemingway who gave us male definitions of manhood to ponder, cherish, and even grow by is about to be lost" (241). Hence, there seems to be a reluctance (by some) in dealing with aspects that complicate traditional perceptions of masculinity, and which previous scholars have avoided in order to maintain a conventionally friendly image of Hemingway. The fact remains however that, in the case of homoeroticism and how it functions within the representation of masculinity in the Hemingway texts, "its" presence is there. Certainly, in the novels *In Our Time* and *The Sun Also Rises*, Hemingway presents a very delineated homo-social aspect in the narratives' sub-text which "emerges" a non-conventional presence, despite the patriarchal structure of the text and the homophobic attitudes of the time (Kimmel 219).

Traditionally, *In Our Time* has been seen as a text which reveals the trauma of the characters due to war. However, although traditional critiques of *In Our Time* distinguish the characterization of the novel as trauma upon a normative heterosexual identity (Young, Phillip 99), there exists another paramount reality which surfaces within the text--a homosexual reality. Certainly, to

regard the characterization of the novel as "trauma" upon normative masculine psyche would contend that this psyche must always be heterosexual. This would then suggest that the explicit and implicit homosocial and homoerotic nature of *In Our Time* and *The Sun Also Rises* are marginally reduced to a digression; non-normative behaviors exist in the text because of trauma. Yet, what can be evidenced in the text is the representation of homosociality as true to the characters nature. The novel can be analyzed from a perspective which determines a homosexual existence traumatized not by the war, but rather, by the 1920s social conventions outside of the war.

In the story "Three Day Blow," Nick and Bill's homoerotic relationship distinguishes an identifiable yet hindered homosexual presence. Hemingway writes: "Nick poured out the liquor. Bill poured in the water. They looked at each other. They felt very fine" (46). In this passage we begin to see a definite homoerotic presence emerge in the text. Analysis of the lines progression reveals how sub-conscious desires surface within this scene, although they are not allowed to "realize" because of Nick and Bill's environment (44). First, the line begins with Nick's pouring in the liquor, as the

initiating act of desire. Next, Bill adds his ingredient for the mixture--the water--thereby addressing his acceptance of Nick's initiation. The succession of the next two sentences leads to a culmination of these two acts, which occurs after "They looked at each other" and ends with "They felt fine." The structural language of this scene and the "feeling" felt at the end of the sentences, relate to a euphoric feeling indicative of a sex act. This scene begins a series of developing homoerotic instances within "Three Day Blow" that proposes definitions of masculinity amongst and beyond conventional patriarchal ideology.

In another section of the text, Hemingway exemplifies the homoerotic nature of Nick and Bill's relationship with the image of "forest lovers"--who sleep with a naked sword between them (42). The image of the naked sword is particularly revealing (as a sexually-charged phallic symbol) since Nick and Bill are themselves alone in a forest (40). Also interesting is how Hemingway uses the phallogentric symbol of a "naked sword," reverting to emblems from Renaissance conventions. Through Renaissance convention, the "naked sword" was a symbol of a love that exists yet pretends not to (John Webster 433). In John

Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi* (1623), for example, Antonio and the Duchess will sleep with a "naked sword" between them in order to remain chaste, although they desire each other and eventually consummate their love (Act I, sc. II, 433/Act II, sc. I, 78).

Bill and Nick's affections are similarly portrayed romantically in a following passage where Nick muses in the mirror at an image like himself. Hemingway writes: "On his way back to the living room he passed a mirror in the dining room and looked in it. His face looked strange. He smiled at the face in the mirror and it grinned back at him. He winked at it and went on. It was not his face but it didn't make any difference" (45). Certainly, there are many ways in which this passage could be read. It can be read both symbolically and metaphorically with other themes that exist within *In Our Time*. But if it is read literally an interesting formulation can be arrived and one which definitely goes with the homoerotic subtext of the story.

In this scene, Nick is traveling back from the kitchen, to the living room, where notably Bill is (45). He looked in the mirror and saw a face that was *not* his. By the numerous homoerotic instances provided in the text,

and if Bill is in the proximity of the living room, the face, which was not Nick's, could very well be a reflection of Bill, who is notably at the hindsight of the passage, and interiorly at the repressed subconsciousness of Nick's desire (43). The homoerotic realization then becomes apparent as Nick "winks" at the face that "grins" back at him, providing an effectuation of homosexual response and request, indicative of a love relationship between Bill and Nick. What materializes in "The Three Day Blow," then, is the realization of a homosexual existence that, while repressed, shows through. The fact that Nick is able to bond with Bill in a manner that he couldn't in the previous story "The End of Something" with Marjorie (34), further places a homoerotic subtext by which we can see "Three Day Blow" with. Yet, although Bill and Nick's relationship creates a disruption to normative heterosexual gender relationships in the novel, it also presents a trauma to a homosexual identity, which, remaining in the sub-text, is repressed because of social conventions (Kimmel 153; Pleck 21; Messner 7).

While it may be traditionally suggested that Nick's homosexual identity is due to a fluctuation of gender associations caused by the war, what the text reveals is a

psychological trauma that is caused because of the conventions before and particularly after the war. Nick's initial repression is due in large part to his inability to realize his homosexual identity before the war (48), and similarly after the war, when he is no longer in an environment that fosters identification with other men (as seen in "Big Two Hearted River" (156)). Repeatedly in the novel, societal conventions act as traumatic agents towards Nick and other characters, who find themselves overwhelmed by the repressive social regulations of the time. In a significant passage, before the war, where the "forest lovers" are connected by the phallic symbol of the "naked sword," Hemingway writes, "'It is a symbol,' Bill said. 'Sure,' said Nick, 'but it isn't practical.'" (42). What is seen in this passage is the realization of convention, through "practicality," as hindrance. At a time when Bill and Nick are alone in the woods, increasingly intoxicated and engulfed with homoerotic signals and discourses, there comes a sudden break within homosexual consciousness; "practicality," as a convention of social value and judgment (Foucault 26), abruptly barges into Nick and Bill's homoerotic setting. The identification of "practicality" becomes a significant

heterosexual convention which acts as a repressive element to the homosexual realization of the characters. Hemingway later reiterates, "'Bring one of the big beech chunks,' Bill said. He was also being consciously practical" (45). The repeated use of "practicality," thus, as a conscious effort which both Bill and Nick are preoccupied with, suggests a suppression of subconscious desire that yearns to express itself within this forest setting but cannot. From this perspective, it is clear to see that Nick's characterization, which Hemingway acknowledges and perhaps uses to disrupt the cultural constructs of the time, is caught between the realization of naturally being unable to fulfill a true relationship with Marjorie, while at the same time, unable to realize his "other" identity because of social convention. The convention of being practical within a heterosexist environment begins to create a trauma, even before the war, for Nick.

Hemingway's text *The Sun Also Rises* is also revealing of homoerotic masculinities that become traumatized by sexual conventions. Bill asserts in the text, "Listen. You're a hell of a good guy, and I'm fonder of you than anybody on earth. I couldn't tell you that in New York. It'd mean I was a faggot" (121). This passage is

interesting because, given within a text which like *In Our Time* has obvious homosocial and homoerotic attributes, it addresses not masculine and "non-masculine" types of love, but of where men *can* and *cannot* express affection for one another. Poignantly, what changes in this passage is not Bill's feelings towards Jake (which is one of deep fondness), but rather, the realization of where these feeling can be expressed.

The analogy of this passage with that of "Three Day Blow" is that although both take place in a forest-like setting and away from the social conventions of society, they are still stricken by the inevitability of a social shadow which they can't escape. Similar to the war, which allowed, through consequence, the exclusive expression of homosociality and male bonding, Hemingway uses the naturalistic and isolated setting of the forest to place the characters in an environment away from convention, or the "arenas" of performances. Yet, as evidenced through Bill, they are nevertheless aware that outside this isolated place they will no longer be allowed to express themselves without social stigma. The irony which Hemingway is playing with here is how patriarchal codes that at once glorify masculinity, often fall victim to its

own regulations. In other words, even as Bill desires the "entity" that becomes idealized in the patriarchal model-- "masculinity" (in a classical Greek sense)--he cannot because of the underlying paradoxical realization that although the phallus is prized and idealized (within patriarchal discourses) it itself cannot be subjugated or actually desired sexually.

Therefore, men must value "masculinity" and phallogocentric idealizations but only as long as they remain "subjects" within the hierarchical and binary positioning of subject-object extremes. Just as violence, sexuality cannot escape the political nature by which it is trapped and regulated (Foucault 6). Just as heterosexual discourses are encouraged to validate masculinity, the out in the woods feature of Bill and Nick's relationship reveals a repressive speech act that performs "other" masculinities in the context of silence (Sedgwick 68). Thus, we see Krebs utter in "A Soldier's Home": "You couldn't talk much and you did not need to talk. It was simple and you were friends" (72).

The progression of *In Our Time*, furthermore, lends itself to an inevitable awareness of outside convention intruding upon a homosexual identity. "Three Day Blow"

presents sexual pre-war trauma through the character of Nick, although Nick's character during the war is able, for a brief moment, express subconscious longing within a supportive environment. The Chapter VI vignette is one example where we see unrestricted male discourse within an environment that allowed male bonding and homosocial identification (61). Nick utters: "Senta Rinaldi. Senta. You and me we've made a separate peace" (63). This passage demonstrates homosocial bonding as "peace" within a chaotic world, and where men, in order to live with one another freely, must be willing to die as a consequence. Unlike the hypothesis which presents war as trauma to a heterosexual identity, what the war becomes in this instance is a normalization of a homosexual identity. In this manner, homosexual identification adheres trauma within conventional environments, but finds "peace," paradoxically, within environments which allow homosocial expression (63). At the conclusion of the text, the emergence of trauma is once again revealed within an environment critically aware of social mores, caused not necessarily because of the war, but again, because of convention (156).

The stories "Soldier's Home" and "Big Two Hearted River" represent post-war characters lost within conventional environments that restrict the exclusive possibility of male bonding. In "Soldier's Home," and after a dialogue describing the temptations and weaknesses of men during the war (75), Krebs signals, "I don't love anybody" (76). Krebs, who is both a victim of the war and the asphyxiating social and religious conventions depicted through his mother (75), shows ambivalence to everything including heterosexual relationships (73). His remarks are further revealing in the context of the other stories within *In Our Time*, in which heterosexual realization is continually negated (86,93). The underlying meaning of Krebs's remark, then, relates to an awkwardness in a return to patriarchal conventions.

Similarly, Nick resurfaces in "Big Two Hearted River" with an analogous trauma, as he re-enters an asphyxiating heterosexist environment that presented stagnation at the beginning of the text. Like Krebs, Nick's social trauma results not only in an inability to have a relationship with a woman, as he had with Marjorie (34), but ultimately in an inability to form a relationship with anybody at all, since complete ambivalence is the result of the

repressed subconscious in the text. In "Big Two Hearted River," Hemingway writes, "Nick stood up on the log, holding his rod, the landing net hanging heavy, then stepped into the water and splashed ashore. He was going back to camp. He looked back. The river just showed through the trees. There were plenty of days coming when he could fish the swamp" (156). This passage portrays Nick within his own isolated world, in an almost dreamy utopia, where existence comes only through the reliance on self. What is revealing in this account is how, compared with "Three Day Blow," Nick's quasi-solace in his bonding with Bill and later with Rinaldi, in the end is defeated within an out-of-war environment. Furthermore, not only does the homosexual subtext continue within "Big Two Hearted River" (155), but ambivalence comes particularly after a priest's instructions to "be a man" in the previous vignette (143). Therefore, what is revealed in Hemingway's *In Our Time* is the complete emergence of religious and social conventions which asphyxiate the characters because of "practicality," ideology, and heterosexist formulations. The trauma in the novel becomes one in which the characters are unable to realize autonomy because of

social conventions; paradoxically, "manhood" now acts as an antagonist in the formation of these "masculinities."

Hence, trauma within *In Our Time* is presented not entirely as the result of war, but rather by the coming back into an environment which becomes more debilitating than the war. Trauma succeeds not only by presenting disfigurements within traditional heterosexual frameworks, but ultimately encroaches by the un-realization of the homosexual identity which suffers within the text. No longer able to realize his desires within the fostering "arena" of the war, Nick represses a sub-conscious need for male love and attraction until, frustrated, he succumbs to the inevitability of an ambivalent existence. His ambivalence occurs because of a social order that he cannot fully accept or be accepted in. Ironically, what this revelation depicts is that, just as war can be seen as traumatic upon "normative" heterosexual relationships, it can also be seen as a brief normalization of gay sexuality. Hemingway's relentless use of a queer subtext, through language, imagery, and semiotic degrees of "camp," distinguishes war's undeniable effects upon not only heterosexual masculine identity, but a homosexual

"masculine" identity which fluctuates between homosocial normalcy and conventional regulations.

Similarly, in *The Sun Rises* we similarly see homoerotic representations as a means to create outlets within conventional sexuality, and to reveal patriarchal ideologies as a source of suffocation. In this manner, Hemingway continually represents masculinity as a form of struggle. In the scene where Pedro the bullfighter is introduced, the prizing of the male image is so profound that Pedro is objectified and becomes visually fascinating to Jake (170,188). In a consistent sequence of remarks over Pedro's visual "masculine" aspects, Jake admonishes: "He's nice to look at" (188), "He a damn good-looking boy, When we were up in his room I never saw a better looking kid" (170), "He's a fine boy" (167), and "[. . .] those green trousers. Brett never took her eyes off of them" (169)--and Jake seemed not to take his eyes off them either. Similarly, in the descriptions of Lady Brett Ashley, who is at once exemplified as a love interest for Jake (albeit one he can't attain), she is characterized through very masculine ways--having short hair and dressing in a man's felt hat (31).

Nick describes Brett as "damned good-looking. She wore a slipover jersey sweater and a tweed skirt, and her hair was brushed back like a boy's" (30). Jake's description of Brett Ashley--his love interest in the story--is in the same "damned good-looking" manner in which he describes Pedro. Hence, the fact that her appearance is that of a boy signals the way in which Hemingway seems to posit disruptive realizations of heterosexual masculinity, while on the surface admonishing it. Furthermore, although Nick's character on one level tries to distance himself from the effeminate "superior" men who dance with Lady Brett Ashley at the beginning of the text (30), Hemingway nevertheless undermines this position later on, as Nick sexually objectifies Pedro and is sexually objectified by Bill. As such, although Nick begins with a strong conventional antagonism against "other" sexual masculinities, he ironically becomes an "other" in the development of his own character.

What the Hemingway text identifies as an issue of masculine validation is a struggle because of necessary performance. My focus here is not on Hemingway's own sexuality, but rather, on his representation of masculinity. His texts reveal various masculinities, all

the while acknowledging, like "Bill": how, where, and through what means to delicately do it. Modellmog, Comley and Scholes have certainly shown that Hemingway's "interests" in homoeroticism and other "subversive masculinities" have problematized traditional perceptions of the Hemingway text (Comley 143), but these representations seem more focused on revealing the paradoxical and hypocritical ideologies of patriarchal thought, than merely espousing one masculinity over another. Instead of fearing what these homoerotic representations may mean of our culturally guarded image of Hemingway (and one which still insists on a differentiation between "subject" and "other"), we can see Hemingway's representations of masculinities as one that provides a more complete view of humanity. As such, Hemingway's use of a homoerotic "subject" provides the means by which he at once acknowledges the performative aspects of masculinity, while ultimately revealing its elusiveness within real-world experiences and numerous masculine possibilities.

Ambivalence as Inevitability

What can be conceptualized through Hemingway's representations of masculinity is that convention subsumes men's sexuality/identity even as it purports to the very idealization of patriarchal aesthetics (the celebrating of manhood). The way in which women, particularly Brett Ashley, act as mere sexual objects (whether as an ideal or ironic critique) within the competing discourses of men (between Cohn, Jake, Mike, and later Pedro), accentuates the fact that women are never really the issue within patriarchal politics, but other men. Under the Hemingway rubric, the fact that men cannot respond to a homosexual reflex although directed to within a phallogentric society, furthermore, creates the sexual struggle between heterosexist environments and homoerotic instances. As "Three Day Blow" concludes, what relieves Nick is the fact that the possibility of heterosexual realization exists, although he ends where the story begins--with a possibility that is idealized but never materializes (49). This idealization and realization complex thus becomes a trap. It is a trap because the valuing of men in a patriarchal culture could create homoerotic feelings, yet, because men are principally tied to a hierarchical system

which depends on their maintaining "subject status," these feelings can never be realized. The only solution which then becomes an option is ambivalence.

Ambivalence becomes the defining element which marks Hemingway's representation of masculinity. At the end of *In Our Time*, after a brief exit in the novel, Nick Adams reappears after the war. The image that we get of Nick in "Big Two Hearted River" is that of an ambivalent and isolated figure. He is alone in the woods and finds solace within his own ambivalence and isolation (156). Since, by this time, heterosexual realization has not come for Nick and convention prohibits a homosexual reality, this image suggests that the only way for Nick to achieve realization is through the prizing of his own self: physically, psychologically, and sexually (155). Henceforth, Nick's holding his "rod" by a river in which "fish float by," provides the means by which masculinity is "achieved" in the Hemingway text (155-156). His escape channels through ambivalence. As Strychacz concurs, "The story of Nick's expedition to the 'Big Two-Hearted River' is perhaps Hemingway's most remarkable attempt in *In Our time* to attain a new vision of manhood. For the first time the protagonist stands alone, a strategy that divorces ritual

gestures from their performance function" (31). Therefore, whereas on the surface Hemingway works within the conventional gender ideals of the 1920s, through his representations of masculinity, we see the development of a masculine reality that transcends patriarchal ideologies.

Similarly in *The Sun Also Rises*, ambivalence becomes a central feature in the representation of Jake. Jake's castration, an obvious Freudian inculcation by Hemingway, becomes not only psychologically stagnating, but as well, affects any possibility of sexual realization for the character. Although Jake's ambivalence is marked by his incapacity to attain the Lady Brett Ashley, it is also marked by his inability to form any union since, as dictated by convention, his "interest" in Pedro, or that of Bill towards him, is out of the question. Therefore Jake in *The Sun Also Rises* is doomed an even worse fate than Nick within *In Our Time*. Jake suffers a worse fate because, in the end, "Jake" has no rod to hold and therefore cannot even be socially validated through self-reliance. In what could then be a critique by Hemingway of acceptable "arenas" for masculine performance as a whole, Debra Moddelmog contends, "Hemingway's life and especially

his fiction constantly call into question the validity of society's prescriptions for gender identification and sexual orientation" (245). In Hemingway's representations, Jake is truly a "lost" person who can never escape into any acceptable performance or identity.

What Hemingway's representation gives us is masculinity as a form of a struggle; displays of conventional ideals give the illusion of power, but men are mere pawns within the greater scheme of patriarchal politics and attain no real "identity" beyond the act of performance. As a result, men attain more negative consequences in their performance of gender than they ever do "rewards." Whereas some can contend that violence is the culminating masculine feature within the Hemingway text, ambivalence seems to be what encapsulates both the idealizations and realizations of masculine performance.

Furthermore, Hemingway's representations of masculinity suggests that, although masculinity is idealized by patriarchy, it is also suffocated by it. Throughout *The Sun Also Rises* and *In Our Time* we get glimpses of how the performance of masculinity malfunctions for the characters. In the process, we also see a paradox emerge which goes beyond the war or the

political fragmentation of society. At its core, the masculinity complex that Hemingway establishes calls into question the essentialist ideals of the 1920s. In regards to violence, as an example, Hemingway reveals how one can perform an act of violence, or even rationalize violence as an essence of masculinity (as Jake ponders in *The Sun Also Rises*), but it cannot be an intrinsic characteristic of masculinity if its end result is to maim it. This suggests that, in the participation of violence, men lose themselves by accepting this masculine "virtue."

Therefore, as Butler reveals, gender is but a political artifice that comes upon the body and can never be reduced to more than what it artificially is, or similarly, heightened to a level that doesn't exist (11). Although Hemingway searches through violence "a" synthetic tangibility, he realizes in the end that it is elusive and meaningless. Ambivalence, then, becomes the only means to cope with this patriarchal paradox.

Similarly, in Hemingway's constant and "obsessive complications of heterosexual love" (Moddlemog 14), he dictates how masculinity in itself cannot be reduced to sexuality. In the Hemingway text, it becomes too problematic to do so. Heterosexuality is thus problematized

in his texts for the very reason for which patriarchy encourages it; Hemingway's continual imagery of homoerotic and homosocial nuances reveal a masculinity so attached to the artifices of the phallus that, as it seeks it, it is reprimanded further. It also suggests that sexuality is yet another political entity, very much in the Greek classical style, in which men's agency is attained through the reinforcement on the other. The fact, however, that this must be dealt with the dual nature of society, religious context, and what Foucault calls "hypocritical repressive norms" (The History of Sexuality: Vol I), creates yet another struggle within patriarchal politics. What we see is a representation of masculinity, within the Hemingway text, that is structured on fragility, elusiveness, ambivalence and struggle. The struggle that characterizes masculinity in the Hemingway text--in which masculine ideals act at odds with masculine realizations--will be explored further in the representations of Willa Cather. Yet, although Willa Cather acknowledges the conflict between convention, gender, autonomy, and ontology, unlike Hemingway, her works are more representative of disrupting the model all together. Therefore, whereas Hemingway discovers masculinity as a form of a struggle, Cather disrupts conventional ideology altogether, and foregrounds what post-modern theorists relate to a series of plausible non-binary gender possibilities.

CHAPTER FOUR

WILLA CATHER

Willa Cather and the Unconventional Male

One of the most prominent authors who depicts masculine representation through and beyond the conventional ideologies of the 1920s is Willa Cather in her novel *O Pioneers!* and short story "Paul's Case." In *O Pioneers!*, masculinity is presented within the cultural conventions of the early twentieth-century, as well as within the non-traditional types of masculine men who act as minorities in Cather's texts. As Kathleen Costello-Sullivan points out in "In a New Country," Cather's depictions of traditional men may signify the ways in which minority men who settle in the prairies deal with their cultural definitions of masculinity differently from American ideals (111). Edward Bloom writes:

The changing mask of America exacts from each writer attention to problems which, at least in an exterior fashion, are significantly focal in his age and in no other. Miss Cather has represented the tensions of American existence in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Dealing with ethics rather than

with manners, dedicated to a personal, non-doctrinal concept of salvation, she drew her characters as moral agents, somewhat as abstractions, if more balanced in physical properties than Hawthorne's. (241)

Cather's representations, as Bloom suggests, are a product of her time and show the constraints and limitations of her society. Her texts seem to work with both a consciousness of the ideal and the real. In regards to gender, paradoxically, attaining "agency" (or realizing one's own sense of self) is what evolves in the Cather narrative through the negative consequences her characters face. The degree to which the male protagonists in *O Pioneers!* pay a price for the "passionate" and sentimental lives they want to live reveals an awareness of the "costs" to unconventional displays of masculinity.

In order to analyze Cather's representation of unconventional masculinities, however, it is important to situate a brief context in relationship to *O Pioneers!*. The development of Cather's *O Pioneers!* occurred within a time of social and political change. On the social front, women were attaining the right to vote and the "new woman" movements began shaping social and political spheres

(Kimmel 102). With the emergence of the "new women," there were influences in the way in which female experiences were able to surface amongst centuries of patriarchal ideologies. While this wave of feminism signaled a revolution in the perception of women, it also created a backlash by patriarchal institutions which felt challenged by a disruption to their power (Kimmel 105). Therefore, although the formation of "new" views of women emerged, there were also antagonistic agents intent on maintaining a hierarchy of gender and a "subject"/"other" polarity (Kimmel 117). Adding to this social reality, the war also had an effect on gender modalities (Kimmel 118).

These events not only had an effect on political formats but on literary ones as well. In *O Pioneers!* Cather disrupts conventional views and gender roles. As a result, the emergence of the first woman pioneer in American literature is created (Doane, April 7, 1998). Alexandra Bergson, the text's central and preeminent character, succeeds in a world where no woman had ever ventured in literature (306). Through Alexandra, Cather overshadows many of the old customs in the novel, and subsequently, many of the traditional gender constructs of her culture. As Bloom acknowledges, "Like Thoreau she

[Cather] challenged her own society, and like him demanded a return to good purpose" (245). As such, Alexandra masters the land, dominates it, and takes the place of a traditionally male presence. Yet, although this can appear as a feminine realization in the novel, the extent to which it characterizes a feminine "consciousness" is problematic. It is problematic because although Alexandra posits a female presence in the place of a traditionally male one, her triumphs, which are tied to the land, come notably through her demonstrations of 1920s masculine ideals tied work and "rationality" (Kimmel 144). Cather writes:

Alexandra had never heard Marie speak so frankly about her husband before, and she felt that it was wiser not to encourage her. No good, she reasoned, ever came from talking about such things, and while Marie was thinking out loud, Alexandra had been steadily searching the hat-boxes. 'Aren't these the patterns, Maria?' (198)

What is seen in this passage is that, while Alexandra becomes shaped by her role with the land, she becomes "problematized" by that role. Within a cultural time in which women were supposed to be "maternal," social, and

subservient to gender norms (Pleck 22), Alexandra isn't. Alexandra uses emotion instead of reason and as such displaces the "caring" compassionate ideals of femininity with ones culturally ascribed to masculinity (Kimmel 102, 105). Furthermore, Cather begins to create breakdowns of gender constructions, which, as it complicates feminine ideals through the female acquisition of "male traits," also complicates masculine ones. The display of masculine traits within the character of Alexandra begins a series of androgynous positions which disrupt binary conventions. Therefore, what Cather seems to be working with is not a positioning of a "feminine" consciousness but something beyond.

Cather disrupts the conventional ideals of her time by creating a character that disallows herself the experience "emotion" as traditionally ascribed to the feminine role. Cather writes, "She had never been in love, she had never indulged in sentimental reveries. Even as a girl she had looked upon men as work-fellows. She had grown up in serious times" (205). Alexandra's stoic characteristics are further magnified when she is placed amongst other female characters, who make Alexandra's "rationality" and lack of passion all the more obvious

(78). Although Alexandra is certainly revolutionizing the traditional female role by being a pioneer, the fact that she cannot escape this "reasoned" and emotionless existence reveals that this new role she attains is not necessarily idealistic. In the characterization of Alexandra as the pioneer figure, moreover, Cather begins revealing not the shortcomings of Alexandra, but those of the pioneer position itself. As such, Alexandra's shortcomings become a depiction of the limitations of the pioneer ethic, which then becomes a critique of conventional masculine roles. Alexandra's blindness and suffocating "reasoned" positions are reflections of a masculine defect that comes through the consequences of her masculine performance with the land (203).

By conquering the land, Alexandra attains only a bittersweet realization of her personal goals in the novel. In assuming the pioneer role, she is simultaneously unable to allow herself any passion, or attain an inkling of what was to come for Emil and Marie (269). This paradox reiterates a masculine struggle for the protagonist, who fluctuates between a realization of self and one of patriarchal necessity. The land is inherited from the patriarchal figure in the text, John Bergson. John Bergson

posits forth his patriarchal lineage through Alexandra's character and the land (*O Pioneers!* 24). Alexandra's expectancy to fulfill this patriarchal expectation is one which attains masculine ideals--passed down and reinforced by men.

We further see Alexandra's patriarchal linkage through her father and his linking her to a patriarchal past. Cather writes: "Alexandra, her father often said to himself, was like her grandfather; which was his way of saying that she was intelligent" (23). Cather adds, "But when all was said, he [the grandfather] had come up from the sea himself, had built up a proud little business with no capital but his own skill and foresight, and had proved himself a man" (24). With these passages we not only discover the connection of Alexandra with a patriarchal past, directed through her father, but a connection with a grandfather who, through insight, proved his hard work just as Alexandra eventually does. The inheritance of the land, hence, becomes an inheritance of patriarchally dictated ideals, which embodies itself in the character of Alexandra and presents her with masculine "expectations." The act of subduing the land is one which will generate masculine expectations for Alexandra, simultaneously

creating gender disruptions within the very conventions in which Cather is writing.

Carl's Case

In the development of Cather's gender representations within *O Pioneers!*, there are depictions of masculinity itself. Through her depiction of the male characters in the story, masculine characteristics begin changing diametrically with feminine ones. In the text, feminine characters espouse their dominance by adopting the position and outlooks of traditionally assumed masculine "roles," while at the same time masculine characters adopt "feminine" characteristics (4,24,78). In the characterization of Alexandra, James Woodress contends, "Alexandra combines the attributes of both sexes on the frontier. She has the vision and energy to tame the wild land, a role usually assigned to male pioneers" (246). This phenomenon suggests how Cather disrupts normative perceptions of genders, interchangeably combining aspects of power and passivity through the opposite polars of what 1920s conventions provided. In this manner, men attain characteristics of feminine realization (as we will see in the case of Carl Linstrum), while the main character,

Alexandra, attains traits that represent masculine identification.

Of the many examples within *O Pioneers!* which demonstrate new perceptions of masculinity to the reader, the character of Carl Linstrum provides a completely "new" masculine view. Carl Linstrum steps within the shadows of Alexandra Bergson and becomes instrumental in the novel (137, 303, 307). At the same time we notice that Carl is depicted as a boy who attains feminized qualities (by the conventions of the time). Cather describes him as "a thin frail boy, with brooding dark eyes, very quiet in all his movements" (4). She goes further to say, "There was a delicate pallor in his face, and his mouth was too sensitive for a boy's" (4). With this description we are introduced to the novel's central masculine figure who, besides the land, stands at the backdrop of Alexandra Bergson's interests. Yet, the feminization of Carl is the way in which Cather plays with the conventional ideals of masculinity, particularly at a time when it acts as an antithesis to cultural perceptions (Kimmel 211). Rosowski adds, "Cather contradicts tradition with her depiction of the Alexandra-Carl relationship: whereas strong female heroes are ordinarily linked in love actions to older,

temperate, and wise men, Cather links Alexandra to the younger, sensitive, and uncertain Carl" (77). Not only does Cather disrupt the masculine perceptions of her time by interchangeably switching gender characteristics between male and female characters, but also defies sex role identification in the context of heterosexual relationships (Dubbert 150). As Rosowski notes, "Carl tells his future wife not that she belongs to him [at the end of the novel], as gender convention would dictate, but that she belongs to the land [. . .] now more than ever" (90).

Thus, Cather establishes Carl as the non-normative answer to the nineteenth- and twentieth-century ideals of the American male character. Instead of Alexandra's determining her relevancy through the character of Carl, it is he who establishes himself through Alexandra and her pioneer role. As such, Cather changes the gender order that her culture prescribes, making Carl dependent on Alexandra while simultaneously freeing Alexandra from ever becoming a "possession" of man. By "belonging to the land more than ever," Alexandra gains the position usually ascribed to men (not having to be defined by relationships or social roles), while Carl is acknowledged through his

dependence on Alexandra. Cather places male autonomy and heterosexual bonding at a discursively defying structure in the novel, disrupting the binary determinations of 1920s convention and establishing a new model in its place (Bair 100).

As a realistic acknowledgment of the culture she lived in, however, Cather also represents the traditional aspects of gender ideology through the characters of Lou and Oscar--who signify conventional archetypes in the story. The fact that there are two archetypes of masculinity in the novel: a traditional representation through Lou and Oscar, and the futuristic archetype of Carl, shows how an ideological divide is set up to incorporate multiple masculine existences. The fact that Cather depicts Carl as a protagonist in the novel, however, reveals how this archetype is the one which represents a break in traditional gender regulations and acts as liberation to the reader. It is a break from traditional gender regulations because, on the one hand Cather is placing the traditional outlooks of wealth, land and power into her female protagonist, while on the other hand, positing the traditional aspects of sensitivity,

passivity, and sentimentality in the central male figure which completes Alexandra's character in the end (122).

In the depiction of John Bergson as well, the central patriarchal figure in the text, we see Cather play with gender formulations by placing musical interests in the male character, while strictly a work-ethic one in Alexandra. Alexandra reminisces, "I can remember father when he was quite a young man. He belonged to some kind of a musical society, a male chorus, in Stockholm. I can remember going with mother to hear them sing" (238). What we see in this passage is a realization of a patriarchal figure, who, although dies unsuccessful in conquering the land (238), is "remembered" for his musical attributes. John Bergson becomes the antithesis of Alexandra; he fails in his goals with the land, yet is acknowledged in aesthetic areas that Alexandra would be oblivious to. Certainly, the musical attributes characterized through John Bergson, later embodied in Emil (238), and still later completely personified in the character of Paul (in "Paul's Case"), suggests how Cather disrupts conventional gender presumptions which attribute labor success to men, while such aesthetic success as art to women (Messner 44). Certainly, in the characterization of Mrs. Bergson, Cather

typifies these feminine ideals, such as kitchen work and jar-making (30), as a backdrop with which we see Alexandra's "otherness" in the novel. Therefore, gender constructions are clearly played with in Cather's representations of masculinity and femininity, disrupting polarized nuances of social and political ideology.

However, Carl's character not only directs ways in which the reader accepts other possible constructs of masculinity beside the norm, but foreshadows masculine ideals we have today. This is seen in Cather's use of sentimentality in the representations of Carl and Emil (91,120). Of course, by today's standards, it is no surprise to see sentimentality in men. We are accustomed to see occasional displays of emotion in men (although in appropriate places) and, by and large, sentimentality is encouraged in contemporary society. Yet, these formulations of current society are based on the success of second-wave feminism's ability to open male consciousness to more rounded ways of being. In the time when Cather developed her text, however, such a view of men was not only *not* encouraged but disdained (Kimmel 295). By psychological accounts as well, Freudian perceptions regarded anything feminine (as in the case of

emotion or sentimentality) as the antithesis of masculine realization, or a symptom of abnormal psychosis. Given the cultural and psychological context in which Cather wrote, she is certainly playing with these conventional ideals. As such, she establishes "sentimentality" as a representation of her male character Carl--disrupting cultural perceptions of gender roles.

As representation, however, the reader is confronted with two theoretical positions: one of ideal, through the depictions of Lou and Oscar, and the other of possibility, through Carl Linstrum. What these two representations may mean for a readership is that Cather is uncovering the multi-facetedness of the human condition and developing a genre of "other" masculinities equal to, if not surpassing, traditional models. It signals to a reader that there are other possible models than those which their world presents them with, and that masculinity should be based on what is rather than what should be.

Yet, what Carl's character also reveals, besides a break in traditional masculine models, is a confrontation with conventional barriers which act as obstacles for him and his relationship with Alexandra (70). Cather writes:

Carl threw himself into a chair and pushed the dark lock back from his forehead with his white nervous hand. 'What a hopeless position you are in, Alexandra!' he exclaimed feverishly. 'It is your fate to be always surrounded by little men. And I am no better than the rest. I am too little to face the criticism of even such men as Lou and Oscar. Yes, I am going away; to-morrow. I cannot even ask you to give me a promise until I have something to offer you. I thought, perhaps, I could do that, but I find I can't.

(70)

What this passage shows, besides how "little" Carl is in comparison to the illustrious Alexandra, is that Carl is unable to realize his desires for Alexandra because of masculine principles which act as obstacles to that realization (Rosowski 77). Having to fulfill the role of bread-winner in a climate where it is expected and valued as part of the masculine ideal, Carl, who even as he hints to a disruption with the line "I thought perhaps I could," is unable to do so because of the strong gendered roles of the time and his littleness in overcoming them. The conventional presence of Lou and Oscar acts as the force

that stagnates both Alexandra and Carl in the novel (76). The fact that Alexandra would be the breadwinner in her relationship with Carl becomes too gross a violation in the Lou and Oscar model of gender relations, even as the text is centered upon a female figure (Rosowski 78). Moreover, it is not Carl who stagnates his relationship with Alexandra, but the patriarchal archetypes who make Carl "see" through a patriarchal lens--even when it is of no benefit to him. As Rosowski asserts, "Alexandra's brothers provide an ideological backdrop of the sex-gender system characteristic of the second stage of settling the frontier: Oscar and Lou parody economic and legal restraints upon women" (77). To add to Rosowski's assertions, however, I would also argue that it placed constraints on men as well, since Carl adopted his views only after he talked to Lou and Oscar (171). This reality reveals how the patriarchal lens does not favor all male experiences equally, but those determined by the norm and complacent to power. Since economically and otherwise Carl is not at the structure of power in the novel, he is placed as an "other" in the text and must conform, just as women have traditionally done, to restrictive patriarchal rules.

This phenomenon is also witnessed in the depiction of Emil and Marie's relationship; Emil is the other sentimental masculine figure who breaks, to a certain degree, conventional ideology regarding masculinity. Because of the patriarchal position of "Frank" in the novel, diametrical to Lou and Oscar's presence, conventional ideals regulate Emil's possibilities with Marie and distinguish dire consequences for breaks in norms (Cather 270). Along with Carl, the relationship of Emil and Marie, and Emil's masculine representation in the novel, acts as a further example of how masculinity and masculine constructs are shaped by the conventional and cultural aspects which regulate it (Cather 102). Even as Emil wants to fulfill his romantic desires with Marie, he is stunted by the looming patriarchal figure (Frank) which places convention as an inescapable shadow in the novel (259). Similarly, as Carl attempts to break traditional ideals of masculinity (in pursuing his marriage with Alexandra without being a breadwinner), he is ultimately suffocated by the patriarchal presence of Lou and Oscar and conforms to their pressure (70).

Yet, Lou and Oscar's persuasion of Carl reveals the way in which, like the Hemingway text, masculinity is

validated through and amongst other men. Carl's need to perform in the context of Lou and Oscar's contestations depicts a continual theme of struggle which Cather posits in her masculine protagonist figure. It reveals the way in which although there are masculine possibilities within the reality of human experience (Connell 64), the character must conform to certain traditional archetypal models, which determine necessary acceptance of, and performance to, patriarchal ideology.

What effect this representation may have on a readership becomes paradoxical. It is paradoxical because it works to liberate traditional views of masculinity while at the same time revealing how conventional fixations work to inhibit such liberation. It does, however, provide a lens by which different masculine possibilities are seen, and in the process, perhaps, one can be critical of those not genuine to our own experiences. It may signify, then, that Cather is disrupting normative patriarchal mannerisms not merely with the use of a female heroine figure, but in her depictions of the male characters who are also at odds within the patriarchal presence of their environment. *O Pioneers!* goes against the suppositions of placing

masculinity into one singular model, namely that of Lou and Oscar, and is critical of the principles which determine "gender" violations. Since male domination and economic hierarchy were expected and encouraged at the time in which Cather wrote her novel, this awareness grounds itself at the subtext of her work--as Lou and Oscar become antagonists to the romantic development of Alexandra and Carl. As Cather is disrupting the text's conventional presence with the vilification of Lou and Oscar, she is simultaneously espousing a means by which the reader can create new formulations in her head and be critical of generalized perceptions on gender.

Cather's *O Pioneers!* reveals, therefore, the way in which masculinity can be seen in a multiform amount of ways. At the same time, because of cultural pressures, it (at least outwardly) conforms to one imprint of a conventional ideal. In the novel, the two male characters who achieve a sense of genuine development are the two who face the most consequences for their non-conformity (183, 269). Just as is seen in the Hemingway text, non-performancy exhibits a series of costs for the male characters. In Cather's *My Antonia*, Rosowski adds, "Jim Burden is another of Cather's male characters who have

followed to the end conventions of success, only to deem them inadequate" (78). When compared to *One Of Ours*, where Claude Wheeler's narrative "traces his performance of tasks culturally mandated for a man: to subdue the land, marry a pious woman, and fight for his country," only to die "protecting a bit of French land he only dimly understands" (Rosowski 79), the trivial nature of idealistic conventions are made clear; in the end they create no "agency" beyond the immediate acts of conventional performances. In the case of Carl Linstrum, it is he who parts the relationship with Alexandra, and, subsequently, his desires for her because of cultural paradigms which affect his "perception" of self. In the case of Emil Bergson as well, he is a character in love but is literally cut off by a patriarchal figure which becomes an obstacle in his relationship with Marie (Cather 104,269). In both accounts what is represented are masculine figures who are at once passionate as they are sentimental, yet, because of conventional ideals of gender, overwhelmingly punished by it.

In "Paul's Case," Cather similarly proposes a gender realization beyond those exhibited in her time, all the while with the cost-effective feature that non-performance

entails. The story, which relates to a boy's dismissal of, and attempts to, escape the oppressive culture that surrounds him, provides a means by which Cather directly employs a protest to 1920s gender discourses. Unlike Hemingway, however, who delivers protestation at the subtext of his works and disrupts conventional ideals while carefully (and perhaps conveniently) distancing himself from those very disruptions, Cather is more daring in her resistance to "hegemonic" relegations of gender. In "Paul's Case" we see how the artifice of gender is paralleled with the artifice of art, as a magnification of Paul's unconventional character. Whereas some have seen this as an "othering" of a sexual presence beyond those of conventions, it becomes a complete transcendence of the gender definitions of the 1920s.

The Unconventional Paul

One other way Cather represents masculinity in an unconventional manner is with her characterization of Paul in "Paul's Case." Cather writes, "Paul entered the faculty room suave and smiling. He wore an opal pin in his neatly knotted black four-in-hand, and a red carnation in his button-hole. His eyes were remarkable for a certain

hysterical brilliancy, and he continually used them in a conscious, theatrical sort of way, peculiarly offensive in a boy" (34). Cather later remarks through one of Paul's teachers, "The boy is not strong, for one thing. There is something wrong about the fellow" (35). This series of depictions represents a masculinity at odds with its culture. Comparing Paul's masculinity with the social ideals of the time, which found anything that suggested weakness or "femininity" to be the opposite of masculinity (Kimmel 195), a purposeful digression from patriarchal ideologies is apparent. The result of this digression is that Paul is turned into an outcast, or an "other," in the text. Therefore, from the very outset of the story, and similar to the Hemingway narrative, Paul's conventional surroundings will mark his awkwardness in the text and become antagonistic to his form of masculinity.

However, within this very early section of the story, there are many elements that act differently from those in the Hemingway text. For instance, Paul not only addresses his masculinity in a way different from what social ideals prescribe, but he is also conscious of it. It is this consciousness that becomes the most offensive aspect to his character, and even more so, to his surroundings.

Cather writes, "he had made all his teachers, men and women alike, conscious of the same feeling" (35). Paul does not only *not* conform to his surroundings, but moreover, tries to make his surroundings conform to him. In this manner, Paul's masculinity poses a threat because he is unwilling to perform his masculinity within an arena that "legitimizes" gender, and worse, makes it a virtue to show that unwillingness. As a result, Cather creates at the very psychic and conscious level what Hemingway could only acknowledge in the subconsciousness or the subtext of his work. In other words, whereas Hemingway uses the bullring and the war as arenas for the legitimizing of masculinity, Cather uses the school environment as the arena for subversive masculine validation. As such, Cather uses this arena as a way to disrupt the normative order of sex-role identity (Hatty 111), and places a figure which transcends, like Alexandra does in *O Pioneers!*, the expectations and limitations of 1920s conventions.

Cather transcends gender norms in Paul's necessity to lie in the short story. Paul's use of lying, which Cather deposits at the beginning of the story and continually throughout in order to avoid overwhelming "friction" with his environment (34,42,43,47), is the means by which Paul

outwardly portends to conventional ideals while maintaining his ambivalence towards them. Lying is then a necessity for a character who mocks an environment which functions on lies (34). His lying calls to question the very definitions his society generates--the fragile nature by which "lies" or "truths" are socially constituted. The masculine "truths" that Paul's teachers expect from him are not the "truths" that are a reality to his character, and thus truth, through conventional definitions, become "lies" for Paul. The result of this "struggle" (between lies and truth), of course, brings us back to what Hemingway depicts in his texts through ambivalence. Early on Paul feels ambivalent within an environment which becomes a suffocating presence. Because of this fact, he declares to his Principal, "I didn't mean to be polite or impolite. I guess it's a sort of way I have, of saying things regardless" (35). Paul's ambivalence is thus a protest within a conventional environment that becomes unaccommodating because of his unconventional presence.

Also revealing in Paul's statement of "saying things regardless," is that it comes after the depositions of his teachers, which, led by a female English teacher, creates the suffocating nature of his indifference (35). Although

some may see Paul's confrontation with this English teacher --"his shudder and retrieval of hand when her hand guided his" (34)--as a "shudder" to normative heterosexual relations, I argue that it is merely a psychological reconfiguration with which Cather plays. The 1920s was a time of psychological hypothesis' and Freudian postulations. Among them, of course, is the infamous oedipal complex which places the mother as the antithesis of normative masculine development (Connell 15). Taking this context to mind while reading this passage, Paul's dismissal of the female teacher, who leads the others and becomes the most "suffocating" presence for Paul, is the means by which Cather acknowledges the cultural ideologies of her time while disrupting them. Paul, therefore, is in actuality and ironically providing a normative psychological development in the rejection of the English teacher, by Freudian standards, at the precise moment in which he is being determined non-normative by those of his surroundings. As such, Paul's psychological "reaction" is representative of a normative development. Cather posits a disruption to the psychological as well as ideological discourses of the 1920s, legitimizing an "other"

masculinity at the same time it is being objectified in the story.

As the story develops, Cather further twists early twentieth-century masculine ideals while at the same time depicting the "struggle" aspect between ideal and reality. Yet, the struggle between performance and reality not only attains a physical and psychological semblance in her texts, but also a mythic one. Paul in the text is described as both a "boy" and an "old man" (36). Given the nature of the author who, as Rosowski contends, worked with both a "mythic presence as well as a modern one" (68), Cather develops a digression of gender politics as one of mythological proportions. In this manner, Paul's non-conformity comes through the artifice of art--the imaginative presence which informs culture without tangibly affecting it. Paul's identity is linked to a realization of aesthetics and beauty, rather than, as his environment would implore, one of politics and ideology.

Paul's quest for art and the theater are the means by which he escapes the ideological world he lives in, searching for a mythic and aesthetic realization that marks his own identification of self (Carlin 7). It is another means by which Cather disrupts the modernist

culture in which she lives and admonishes an enigmatic presence that transcends time and ideology. Paul's processing of masculinity falls not on the patriarchal model found in the Hemingway text--of man to boy, father to son, or even man to man--but rather, from art to individual. Paul's rejection of his father (37), when, by Freudian formulations, he should be linking himself with him, is the complete fashion by which Cather disrupts the patriarchal processing of masculinity and replaces it with one of aesthetic and trans-historical value. The escape onto the concert halls (42), the discussions of performers (39), and finally the autonomy found within the New York social life (48), all reveal the ways in which Paul's masculinity emerges amongst the suffocating parameters of Cordelia street (40).

What this seems to suggest, however, is not the prizing of "a" masculinity over another, but instead, a restructuring of masculinities which remain in continual flux. Neither Paul nor the folks of the Pittsburgh town are entirely praised or looked at negatively (40, 42). Both Paul and the other characters seem to exhibit the artifice of a binary system that, marked by the gender politics of the 1920s, distinguishes them between axioms

of normalcy and other. By positing an "other" masculinity within the framework of 1920s discourses, Cather provides the means by which, as she does with Alexandra, identity moves beyond the realm of patriarchal politics and achieves autonomy in what it accomplishes rather than in what it performs. The didactic feature of the Cather story, then, seems centered upon the realization of one's own identity beyond the artifice of the conventional arena; it is the sense of "self" which Cather values as an accomplishment.

Yet, the accomplishments of Paul in "Paul's Case" are in themselves complicated through an awareness of social conventions. Paul accomplishes only a bittersweet realization in comparison to the "costs" he attains. Paul continually rejects the conventional ideals of masculinity--incorporated through the father (40), church (40), and work (43)--in search of "a certain element of artificiality [which] seemed to him necessary in beauty [. . .] because, in Paul's world, the natural nearly always wore the guise of ugliness" (42). In this manner, Cather purposefully sets up the repressive conventions of her time (Messner 311), as demonstrations of the obstacles they pose to Paul. Seeking an "agency" of his own version

of masculinity, Paul's only means of escape is through the New York night-life which offers him the aesthetic realization to his character (48).

Hence, Paul's, like Alexandra's, self-realization is made only bittersweet by the actions he makes. As an apothecary-jar function that reveals Paul as an everyday figure, Paul's character is complicated by the manner in which he is able to escape. His character steals in order to attain the things he wants (45), and although his stealing provides him an escape, he handles it quite irresponsibly while in New York (47). This therefore complicates his ultimate act of defiance, which is at once made heroic while at the same time vilified. It provides the way in which Cather seems not only to disrupt traditionalist binary formations of masculinity and femininity, but as well, distinctions of good and bad, right and wrong, or, again, truth and lie. Her representations thus move beyond those of gender aesthetics to one of philosophical inquiry. Paul's masculinity is revealed as a subject that transcends distinction, polarity and definition; he creates his own version of masculinity although held accountable for that masculinity. In the end Paul dies in a manner

characteristic of "Edna Pontillier" (Chopin 153), which is both tragic and uplifting; he maintains his non-conformity but is ultimately overwhelmed by it.

Cather's bittersweet representation of masculinity suggests how, although Willa Cather posits reconfigurations of femininity and masculinity beyond conventional ideals, there is an awareness that disruptions to traditional models cost, to some degree or another, the characters in her works. The fact that this "cost" affects how "Paul's Case" concludes also suggests how Cather achieves two cultural paradigms for her readership: one with a consciousness of masculinities, while at the same time, an awareness of the cultural obstacles apparent in these reconfigurations. Cather revealed so well the "consequences" of these new gender formations, furthermore, that it might suggest why, perhaps, social changes regarding gender did not fully develop until the feminist movements of the 1970s.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE MASCULINE STRUGGLE

Contexts and Conclusions

While it may be said that Hemingway and Cather's representations embody different characteristics and vestiges of masculinity; in the process, many similar complexities, dynamics, and performance features arise in the construction of masculinity. Their works reveal how gender is the cultural process by which social and political meaning creates "identity" (Smelik 6). Although feminist scholars have long dealt with this phenomenon as a means to raise femininity beyond patriarchal ideology, it has barely reached the consciousness of masculine identifications through men's studies. Current gender theorists acknowledge masculinity as a fluctuating and multi-exchanged phenomenon that is historically and culturally produced. Unlike patriarchal ideologies which have sought to create and benefit from a masculine-feminine differentiation by which cultural norms keep gender in check, what is now known is that such a perception is but an illusion; it has no real tangible

existence beyond that of "performance." As such, gender and masculinity are social constructions.

What this entity--"masculinity"--entails is thus dependent on whatever cultural definition it has at the time. As Kimmel writes, "Manhood has meant different things at different times. Manhood is neither static nor timeless; it's socially constructed" (5). Because of this reality, there can never truly be "a" masculinity, but rather, a series of distinct masculinities which become representative of human reality. At least, from our investigations of the masculinities within the works of both Cather and Hemingway, this "reality" becomes inevitable. We are, nevertheless, constantly instructed to attain the characteristics of appropriate "gender," displaying appropriate ways in which to look, act, dress, and think. In the process, we evolve into a continual negotiation between ideology, performance, and our "selves;" our cultural appearance must always be dealt with in the inevitable process of becoming "subjects" in culture. However, in the struggle between these two paradigms of being--between ideal and reality, performance and ontology--we can wonder to what extent can there be an

identity beyond an acculturated one? Subsequently, must performance be the only means to establish "agency?"

Perhaps one of the ways in which many feminist theorists have dealt with the struggle of self and self in culture is through the realization of androgyny, or a gender that transcends conventional identification. Androgyny is an interesting phenomenon because it attempts to disrupt the binary positioning which patriarchal ideology works from, yet at the same time, possessing established gender characteristics it paradoxically tries to disrupt. Many contemporary theorists, such as Butler (9), Sedgwick (11), and Smelik (3), have suggested a problem with androgyny because, although it attempts to find an identity beyond patriarchal convention, it nevertheless contains a "masculine" and "feminine" presence, albeit together. In other words, androgyny is made up of masculinity and femininity; it doesn't escape those two realities.

Yet, androgyny supersedes the conventional gender norms which were reminiscent of Cather and Hemingway's time. Certainly, the essentialist perceptions of men and their masculine self during the 1920s presented limited possibility of genuine realization beyond political

ideology. Moreover, since "certain" men have always attained a political advantage over women, the sense of having to attain an "autonomous self" has never had to be accounted for in men's experiences or analysis of themselves. Therefore, because men are men, the subject of subjectivity has never had to be analyzed until recently.

The problem with this reality, of course, is that it has meant a dangerous position for men in the greater scheme of masculine politics. As we have already discussed, men's subjectivity is but an illusion. Men's "agency" is brought about not through a realization of "self," but through the performance of conventional ideals (as an illusion of hierarchy). This illusion has made men think that they do not have to seek autonomy because they already attain it. This rationale has been particularly destructive because it maintains men and masculinity within the parameters of an ideal and beyond that which can be questioned. In Marxist terms, it works on a naïve structure, a false consciousness which impresses a subjectivity when one doesn't exist. Certainly, for men who are of color, of a different ethnic background, poor, handicapped, gay, or who exhibit some other form of "otherness," "masculinity," by conventional standards,

does not exist. Masculinity exists only in the act of displaying conventional ideals, which even then, does not guarantee a lifetime membership. Therefore, within male rationale, a false consciousness has been allowed to exist because of a political presence that has consistently benefited from the dissemination of naïve presumptions.

This is not to say that there haven't been men's movements and male groups since the 1920s or since second-wave feminism began. However, in the development of many of these groups, much of their rhetoric has been positioned upon either bringing out a former realization of men, a "mytho-poetic existence" (Connell 23), or one that substantiates one ideology of masculinity for a gentler, yet still hierarchical one (Connell 31). Only in recent years has there developed an understanding by both female and male gender scholars that the realization of one's self must transcend binary positions (Kimmel 12; Connell 4; Butler 9). Postmodern theorists have revealed that masculinity is in itself a construction, and that there are many masculinities in the formation of men's lives (Messner 89). Therefore, what becomes an issue is not an investigation between attributes of "masculinity" or "femininity," but one situated on power. Just as

patriarchy has looked to repress the "other" in women, it has also looked to repress the "other" in men. This "favored place," then, which has traditionally been associated with masculinity, is all but an illusion for countless men who, although perform masculinity to the ideals of a society, do not reap its political, economic, or social rewards.

Therefore, performing masculinity, or "being a man," does not guarantee power. It is constructed only within a cultural mask. Men's performance of their masculinity is nothing but a mirage, a series of acts which continually attempt to achieve an ontological existence within a realm that, in actuality, holds no true ontology. It holds no ontology because the performance is but a fabrication, a means to an end, or a means to attain a sense of oneself in connection to the ideals of one's surroundings. Identity through this means is never plausible, then, since it never achieves an epistemology beyond that which it tries to attain--which is in itself a political manifestation of an illusion. In an identification of gender as "masquerade," philosopher Luce Irigaray suggests, "the masquerade [. . .] is what women do [. . .] in order to participate in man's desire, but at the cost

of giving up their own" (Irigaray 131). Similarly, the performance of masculinity entails legitimizing one's gender through social arenas, even if, as we have seen within both Hemingway's and Cather's texts, it is at a definite cost to one's own sense of self.

What stands at the forefront is the fact that masculinity distinguishes itself only through ideological and political positions. It exists by an acknowledgment of social ideal and cultural identification. To achieve agency within this model is to be all that is ascribed to such agency. In the representation of masculinity through the literature we have seen, there is an inevitable awareness of what masculinity entails and how it must be performed. Through 1920s rhetoric, masculinity means to be a breadwinner, a rough rider, strong, emotionally ambivalent, and compulsively heterosexual. Along with these traits, there are also a multitude of other issues, such as race, that are inherent in this ideal of masculinity (in which masculinity was synonymous with "whiteness"). As Kimmel writes of the 1920s, "Successive waves of immigrants were depicted as less mentally capable and less manly--feminized and thus likely to dilute the stock of pure American blood" (194). Adding to this ethnic

reality, through the works of DuBois, Hughes, Bontemps, and other Harlem Renaissance writers living in the 1920s, there is a definite depiction of how African American men had to deal with "their masculinity" (in which blacks were seen as "boys" not "men") at odds with those of the political structure of white patriarchy (Kimmel 192). What this shows, again, is that masculinity is not fixed and must always be politically negotiated. As such, individuals can easily fall out of the accepted identification of masculinity if they do not continually check themselves, as best they can, within the political ideals of gender. This also represents the way in which the mask--the actuation of masculinity--is an element of struggle. Men of color are another example for which a "white mask" posits a struggle between self and performance--or who one is and must appear--without reaping the same patriarchal rewards.

Thus, both Hemingway and Cather exhibited, complicated, and represented the struggle of masculinity as an inevitability of their time. Their works reveal a desire and almost necessity of attaining the cultural ideals of masculinity, while at the same time acknowledging the cost and consequences of attaining these

ideals. The struggles seen in the Hemingway and Cather texts act as a microcosm of the greater ideological paradoxes of their culture. As such, Nick Adams is a wounded man because he must attain the qualities or "gender markers" that his culture prescribes. As he finds himself unable to do so, he is completely lost and physically/metaphorically wounded. In the same regards, Carl Linstrum and Paul attain some sense of success as their characters emerge at the end of their stories, but it is only through the dire consequences they endure or fall victim to. In a sense, they are wounded characters as well, who, like Hemingway's characters, are wounded because of their own forms of masculinity.

However, whereas Hemingway's characters perform conventional displays of masculinity before realizing the futility of such performances; Cather's characters do not. In the progression of the text, Carl remains the element of what he is, fleeing only at moments where he is suffocated by the patriarchal emblems that stand over him and his relationship with Alexandra. There is never a disavowal of who Carl is, but rather, a simple realization of the social norms that physically alienate him in *O Pioneers!*. The difference between the writers, thus, lies

not in the realization of discovering "masculinities" but in the manner in which they represent them.

In Hemingway's case, Nick and Jake struggle with their own perceptions of "self," unable to attain conventional gender ideals while at the same time unwilling to risk the consequences of "otherness" (represented through the novels' homoerotic subtext). The war and/or violence is the means by which their "masculinity" become sublimated within the conventions of their surroundings. In Cather's novel *One of Ours* we see this contention as well, as Peter Filene writes, "The hero of Willa Cather's novel *One of Ours*, for example, enlisted [in the war] after suffering the humiliation of marriage to a woman of stronger will than his own. Thereafter he never again turned to women for erotic satisfaction. Instead, he reasserted his masculinity by embracing battle and making love to war" (331). Thus, in the Hemingway text and in *One of Ours*, the acceptance of ambivalence becomes a means by which the characters can exist beyond the social regulations of their time.

Simultaneously, ambivalence also becomes an act of defiance. Hemingway reveals a masculinity within "Big Two Hearted River" that creates its own agency through non-

participation and ambivalence. As well, Cather posits the same kind of realization in both *O Pioneers!* and "Paul's Case," only that she, unlike Hemingway, flaunts it at a very external level. As Paul and Carl disrupt cultural ideals of gender by not participating in them, they maintain their own versions of themselves, although certainly facing the consequences because of it.

In their representations of masculinity, Hemingway and Cather depict the performative aspects of gender and how gender must call attention to itself even as it accepts or rejects its conformity within a cultural paradigm. Performance is the means by which one's gender becomes validated within the relationship of society and individual. Hemingway's characters perform masculine ideals and in the process reveal the way in which narration and rhetoric are transformed into a signifying process of gender; the masculine identification within a "text" becomes a vehicle by which ideals are not only identified, but also internalized through reading. Similarly, although Cather disrupts conventional ideology, a patriarchal presence is nevertheless identified within her texts, and convention, as a form of gender hegemony,

acts as the vehicle by which the representation of gender achieves a paradoxical quality.

What the masculine representations of Hemingway and Cather show is a realization of the political and historical climate in which their texts were produced. Both texts become political markers of their historical context. As the mask with which masculinity must be performed with emerges in their texts, a struggle and paradox is revealed. In the displaying of this masculine mask, we discover that within it amass countless other existences, which, although submerged within a culturally adapted one, are there. In this manner, masculinity is but a performance feature which only alludes to agency. The political, subversive, and discursive representation of masculinity within the Hemingway and Cather texts are nothing else than reflections of social ideals and patriarchal limitations (Pleck 31; Brittan 177). The representation of the necessary display of masculinity, in attempting to establish an agency within a conventional model, fails because these elements only produce vestiges of identity, but never a substantive identity. Nick Adams and Jake Barnes perform their masculinity through conventional "arenas" of legitimization, but are trapped

when there is nothing else but the act of performance or the mask itself. Masculinity thus becomes an element of struggle and paradox. By acknowledging this reality, Hemingway realized that male roles and masculinity is a product of something greater that, in the end, made both men and women objects. Hemingway's men are lost, wounded, maimed, caricatured, and turn to ambivalence as solace. They seek refuge through ambivalence, at odds with a world they seek and yet cannot attain; they are made victims because of striving for what is idealized by their culture--to become "real men." Similarly, Cather reveals masculinity at odds with the ideals that traditionally comprise it; her characters are wounded as well because they do not fit within the patriarchal mold.

What we come away with in reading Hemingway's and Cather's representations of masculinity, is that the very structure of this entity--masculinity--is both problematic and politically implemented. *In Our Time*, *The Sun Also Rises*, *O Pionners!* and "Paul's Case" reveal the paradoxes of conventional gender formations and the struggles involved in attaining them socially and representing them through literature. What this signals to an audience, the 1920's readership and beyond, is an acknowledgment of the

necessary performance of gender, even as distinct masculinities are a "reality." The representation of masculinity becomes fixated within its own fictional qualities. Through the narrative form, the representation of masculinity situates the social-exchange value by which masculinity seeks identification through the interplay of culture (performance) and reader (spectator), as they interact within the reading process. As Knights concurs:

A narrative, even when it is written or, for that matter, read-in isolation, is a form of social exchange. It takes place between parties to the narrative exchange, it establishes an environment for events, and designates certain kinds of actions, responsibilities and outcomes. Stories oriented to men and men's experience not only articulate for the future what it is to live and act as a man. They also act as blueprints for future stories. Those narratives become part of a collective stock of ways of construing ourselves and others. (127)

The confrontation between the narrative and the reader is then one realized through dialectical determination. The representations of masculinities provide the ways in which identifications are being negotiated. Both Hemingway and

Cather's texts work as expositions on the ideals of masculinity, while at the same time, present ulterior models as forms of "escape." However, the artifice of performance can nevertheless be identified within these texts, as both writers disrupt the conventional information seen in the magazines, ads, and documents of the 1920s (Kimmel 203). The fact that a multi-forum masculinity must be kept at the subtext of their works, or still within the artifices of "other," moreover, indicates how the gender constraints of 1920s culture remain a barrier within the discourses of both the Hemingway and Cather texts.

Yet, although this conventional inevitability can create the impression that individuals *must* perform their gender in conventional ways in order attain "an identity" (whether or not it is genuine), it is just an impression. Both Hemingway and Cather's texts reveal, in various degrees, a disruption to this rationale. Beyond the 1920s dichotomy of masculine-feminine, passive-aggressive, heterosexual-homosexual, these two authors move beyond the binary systems of their culture. Even in the distinction of androgyny, which still contains a binarism within the artifice of one gender, they move beyond the act of

finding a gender definition; Paul, Carl, Jake and Nick are all masculine, and yet all defy a definition of masculinity. Therefore, what becomes of interest for Hemingway seems not so much about realizing a heterosexual or homosexual identity, but providing, in the everyday complexities of human beings, many identities. Cather as well seems not so concerned with one masculinity over another, but rather, a multiple display of masculinities functioning at the same time. As such, both authors liberate the reader from such definitions as "subject" and "other" within the representations of their male characters, and posit a complicated array of existences and possibilities with which their 1920s culture could not envision at the time.

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