

BEING THE “BULL GOOSE”: Masculinity, Male Relationships and  
Fatherhood in *Bitter Eden*, *King Rat* and *The Road*

by

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## ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the relationships, masculinities and the issue of fatherhood in three different texts, all of which are set in times of extreme crisis and have a male protagonist. The texts are *Bitter Eden* by Tatamkhulu Afrika (2002), *King Rat* by James Clavell (1975), originally published in 1962, and *The Road* by Cormac McCarthy (2006). I begin by comparing the theory of hegemonic masculinity as argued by Raewyn Connell with the theory of homosocial masculinity as argued by Michael Kimmel, and approach the novels from a Gender Studies standpoint, in that I am arguing that, other than hegemonic masculinity, there are other viable masculinities, for example, homosocial masculinity, as seen within the three novels. I argue that the portrayal of men in literature set in times of crisis has changed. Male characters are no longer simply portrayed as being hegemonic and patriarchal but are written as characters showing alternative emotions and reactions to their situations. I also look at the semi-autobiographical aspects of the novels, in that both Tatamkhulu Afrika and James Clavell experienced the situations described in their novels. By including this feature of the two Prisoner of War camp novels (*Bitter Eden* and *King Rat*), I believe that one is able to understand why each protagonist is portrayed as choosing an alternative masculinity to hegemonic masculinity, as the authors themselves have chosen to defy the social norms expected of men who fought in the World Wars. In this same line of thought, I have taken into account the fact that Cormac McCarthy is himself a father, and have applied this knowledge to *The Road*, reading it as a “love story” a father has written to his son, in which the father promises to protect his son, no matter what. The dissertation compares the subversion of the monolithic idea of hegemonic masculinity in each novel.

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## Introduction

“Manliness consists not in bluff, bravado or loneliness. It consists in daring to do the right thing and facing consequences whether it is in matters social, political or other. It consists in deeds not words.” – Mahatma Ghandi

“Though all men be made of one metal, yet they be not cast all in one mould.” – John Lyly

In literature set in times of extreme crisis, the male characters are often portrayed as strong, heroic men who take charge of the situation and of those it adversely affects. They remain stable in unfavorable situations and do not reveal their emotions to those around them. Often, men are portrayed in novels to be hegemonically masculine; they are aggressive, dominant, controlling and heterosexual males who have power over those considered weaker or lesser men than they are. These are stereotypes from society which have been carried through into literature, as can be seen in novels such as *Band of Brothers* (1992), a novel written by Stephen Ambrose, based upon the interviews of men who fought in World War II, which later was adapted into a popular television series. Another such example is the novel by Pierre Boulle, *The Bridge Over The River Kwai* (1954); Boulle’s novel describes the mistreatment of Prisoners of War and focuses on the stubborn honour of the character Colonel Nicholson. The male characters in the novels discussed in this dissertation subvert the idea of hegemonic masculinity, and the authors thus offer their readers viable alternative masculinities. The novels that are compared and contrasted are *Bitter Eden* (2002), by Tatamkhulu Afrika, *King Rat* (1975), by James Clavell and *The Road* (2006), by Cormac McCarthy. The term “bull-goose”, which is part of my title, is used in the novel *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest* by the character Randall McMurphy, and is used to describe a male who is viewed as being the leader of a group and is viewed as an inspiration to the men in that group (Kesey, 1975: 18).

I approach the novels from a Gender Studies standpoint, in that I am arguing that other than hegemonic masculinity, there are other viable masculinities, as seen within the three novels. In order to understand the standpoint I approach the novels from, one must look to the history of Gender Studies, beginning with second-wave feminism. Second-wave feminism began in the early 1960s in America as a delayed reaction to women’s renewed “domesticity” after

having been given more opportunities for work during World War II (Hewitt, 2008: 413), and eventually spread across the rest of the Western world. It differed from first-wave feminism, which began in the nineteenth century, in that it did not focus simply on legal rights of women, but broadened its sights to the issues women experienced regarding sexuality, family, the workplace, reproductive rights, existing inequalities, and official legal inequalities (414). The women involved in the second-wave feminist movement fought to abolish the view that women should be seen as the “second sex” – a term Simone de Beauvoir, a French philosopher and feminist, made popular with her influential book of the same name, published in 1949 (Moi, 2002: 1015). One of the most significant minds of second-wave feminism is Betty Friedan, an American feminist and author of the pioneering book *The Feminine Mystique*, published in 1963. The book focuses on what Friedan called “the problem that has no name”, which is later explained to be the inequality experienced by women at the hands of society (Friedan, 1963: 15). Another note-worthy thinker of second-wave feminism is Kate Millett, whose book *Sexual Politics* was said to be “the first book of academic feminist literary criticism” (Clough, 1994: 473). Millett argues that sex had a political aspect which was recurrently neglected and she discusses the role of patriarchy in sexual relations. *Sexual Politics* was an important work for second-wave feminist literary critique as it examined the politics of sex in a manner which was ground-breaking (475). Millett examines the fact that an economically and financially independent woman was viewed with “distrust”, and that women were “ill-paid and without status” (Millett, 1970: 23) further illustrating Friedan’s “problem that has no name” – the inequality that women faced. Books such as *The Feminine Mystique* and *Sexual Politics* created the opportunity for Women’s Studies to be taught in academic institutions, as it was this literature which encouraged female authors to explore different viewpoints regarding the portrayal of female characters.

Women’s Studies investigates society, politics, media and history from the viewpoints of women, with a feminist standpoint. Women’s Studies originated when professors and students at universities felt they had to address the blatant sexism in many of the courses offered by higher education institutions, and began to offer courses and forums (Shrewsbury, 1987: 8). Queer Theory is also included as another viewpoint. Queer Theory emerged in the 1990s as an amalgamation of Queer Studies and Women’s Studies. Queer Theory approaches texts from a “queer” point of view, and aims to formulate an exact idea of what “queerness” is. Queer Theory, unlike Queer Studies, did not simply divide homosexual behaviour into

“natural” and “unnatural” categories, but expanded its focus into any form of sexual behaviour or identity which fell into normative and deviant categories (Turner, 2000: 106). One of the founding minds behind Queer Theory is Michel Foucault, who believed that sexuality is not an innate aspect of humans, but is “discursive” and “socially formed” (Foucault, 1979: 194). Feminist literature is often analysed and examined by Women’s Studies students (Shrewsbury, 1987: 8), and feminist critique of literature is a result of the “culmination of centuries of women’s writing, of women writing about women writing and of women – and men – writing about women’s minds, bodies, art and ideas” (Plain and Sellers, 2007: 2).

A correlative field of study was also introduced around the same time as Women’s Studies, and it was known as Men’s Studies or “Men and Masculinities” (Connell, 2009: iii). Men’s Studies was developed in opposition to a group known as MRM – the Men’s Rights Movement, which developed in protest to feminism and believed that society had been “feminised” by the women’s movement, and was concerned with the rights which they believed had been taken away from men (iii). The plural “Masculinities” is used as Men’s Studies realised that “within any one society at any one moment, there are multiple meanings of manhood”, meaning that Men’s Studies recognised that hegemonic masculinity was not the only masculinity or mode of manhood experienced by men, and wished to expand on this and understand that, like women experiencing womanhood and femininity, men experience different types of masculinity at different stages of life (Kimmel, 2001: 2). Gender Studies emerged later as a broad area of study, one which addressed gender identity and gender representation. It looks at literature, language, history, political science, sociology, anthropology, cinema, media studies, human development, law, and medicine and how these relate to men, women and LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender) studies respectively (v), while engaging in a debate as to whether gender is innate or socially formed (v). While Gender Studies aims to include all facets of gender, the popular mindset still correlates the word “gender” with “women” (Kimmel, 2001: 1). This could be seen as justified, as it was women who initially made gender “visible as a category of analysis” to academics, but this train of thought makes men “invisible” to those studying gender, thus making men the group who are now experiencing gender inequality. In order to create Gender Studies which is truly a study of all facets of gender, one must include the study of men and masculinities (1).

According to Robert Morrell et al., there are two schools of thought regarding gender, which he names the “Essentialists” and the “Social Constructionists” (2012: 21). Essentialists maintain the belief that gender characteristics are innate and biological, and use evidence from biological and genetic (and sometimes anthropological) studies to support these claims. Social Constructionists argue that gender characteristics are formed purely by “historical, social and cultural factors at a particular moment in time” (22). Morrell et al. also state that hegemonic masculinity could be seen as part of the social construction of men’s identity, as hegemonic masculinity is seen as a “beacon by which the socialisation of young men takes place” (23). Morrell et al. suggest that while most men could be seen to have an Essentialist viewpoint of manhood and masculinity, believing that their “maleness” is an ingrained aspect of themselves, men will experience masculinity in a very intimate and personal level, and not necessarily on a biological level (24). One could argue that the prevailing Essentialist viewpoint is unfair toward women and homo- and bisexual men, because these groups are often not viewed seriously by hegemonic men and institutions, as their complaints concerning general and gender inequality are simply seen as a complaint made by those who lack the masculine gene, which allows men to hold power over others. Morrell et al. propose that, despite the strong Essentialist view many men hold, a new man is emerging, one that is “introspective, caring, anxious, outspoken on women’s rights and domestically responsible” (25). These characteristics are in opposition to how men have traditionally been seen and encouraged to be.

The theory of hegemonic masculinity is one which Raewyn Connell has written extensively about, and it is her concepts which will be discussed in this dissertation. The premise of hegemony itself originated with Antonio Gramsci as the theory of Cultural Hegemony, and this was later altered by Connell to aid her Gender Studies theory of hegemonic *masculinity*. Cultural hegemony was defined by Gramsci as being “the domination of a diverse society by the ‘ruling class’” (Gramsci, 1970: 400). Hegemonic masculinity was previously understood as “the practice that allowed men’s dominance over women to continue” (Donaldson, 1993: 643) but, in more recent times, one could say that it is understood as the practice of allowing more powerful men’s dominance over the “weak” to continue. It could be seen as a theory which has similarities to patriarchy, as both ideals allow men to have power over those who are considered as weaker or “lesser” than they (Connell, 2009: 134). Patriarchy applies to this dissertation in that two of the novels focus on aspects of the military, which is a patriarchal institution, and the third novel concerns the “rule” of a father over his son; however, this

“rule” is not oppressive nor overtly controlling. Connell speaks of the “patriarchal dividend” and defines it as “the advantage to men as a group from maintaining unequal gender order” (142). While this does relate to financial income, the other benefits which men receive from this patriarchal dividend are “authority, respect [...], access to institutional power, emotional support and control over one’s own life” (142). One can see how these benefits also apply to hegemonic masculinity, in that the ruling class of men would also experience these benefits, while those who were considered to be of a “lower class” would not experience the same benefits. The men who support hegemonic masculinity would experience authority and respect (sometimes in the form of fear) from those below them in hegemonic hierarchy (142).

Patriarchy can be seen in particular in Tatamkhulu Afrika’s text when it is put into a South African context; as Afrika is a South African author, contextualising *Bitter Eden*’s protagonist and the author’s views on sexuality, women and equality are important to understanding the reasoning behind why the character is portrayed as he is. South Africa is a patriarchal society, especially with regard to the negative attitude towards women and homo- and bisexuality, particularly in men (Morrell et al., 2012: 24). South African society has “exaggerated racialised gender inequalities and the normative use of violence”, which further shows that it is a highly patriarchal society (Morrell et al., 2012: 25). Hegemonic masculinity also dictates a negative attitude towards alternative sexualities; people who practise homo- and bisexuality are seen as the “Other” and are treated as such.

Connell does, however, theorise that besides hegemonic masculinity, there are three other masculinities: complicit masculinity, marginalised masculinity and subordinate masculinity. Complicit masculinity is a term applied to men who usually do not fit the characteristics of hegemonic masculinity but do not question or oppose this form of masculinity. Marginalised masculinity consists of men who are considered to be outside the bounds of hegemonic masculinity due to their race or social standing, yet still ascribe to the basic characteristics of it, for example, physical strength, ambition or aggression. Subordinate masculinity is made up of men who are completely opposite to the ideals of hegemonic masculinity; they are effeminate, expressive and are sometimes homosexual (Connell, 2009: 50). The characters in the chosen novels do not portray all of these masculinities but one can see obvious portrayals of marginalised masculinity and subordinate masculinity.

Homosocial masculinity is one of the viable alternatives that one can see offered by the authors; this theory of masculinity originates with Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick. Sedgwick suggests that homosocial relationships, while easily distinguishable from homosexual relationships, exist on the same continuum as homosexual relationships, but male-male homosocial relationships are disrupted by the intense homophobia which is supported by the dominant society, yet homophobia is needed in order for men to form homosocial relationships (Sedgwick, 1985: 230 ). Sedgwick also suggests that male-male homosocial relationships could only be realised “by being routed through nonexistent desire involving a woman” (1985: 230). This idea does not relate to all of the chosen texts but can be seen in *Bitter Eden*, in that one of the characters deems his male-male friendship “acceptable” as he claims to have a wife who is waiting for him at home. According to Kimmel, whose adaptation of Sedgwick’s work I will be utilising in the dissertation, “masculinity defined through homosocial interaction contains many parts, including the camaraderie, fellowship, and intimacy often celebrated in male culture” (1996: 8). One can see here how this ideal is different from hegemonic masculinity in that homosocial masculinity is an alternative to hegemonic masculinity as homosocial masculinity is defined by the friendships between men, rather than on the domination of men over other men (and women).

Male bonding is “necessary for military units to fight successfully”, according to Joshua Goldstein, as he states in his book *War and Gender* (2001: 184), and this shows that homosocial masculinity is considered as a viable alternative to hegemonic masculinity. Many soldiers have said in interviews conducted by Goldstein that they fought “not for patriotism [...] but for their close buddies” (2001: 196), an admission which ties in with Kimmel’s description of the intimacy experienced by men in a homosocial environment, and the camaraderie often seen in male soldiers (Kimmel, 1996: 8). The groups which men formed in combat were often more important to them than their own lives, and they developed an “intense love” for one another (Goldstein, 2001: 196) and were prepared to die for one another. This intimate bond between two men is in direct opposition to hegemonic masculinity, as according to the theory of hegemonic masculinity, the stronger male – be it in terms of physical or mental strength – has power over the weaker male and bonding with one another is not seen as a viable or desirable action.

It was not common to find in literature of past eras, concerning men and the “heroics” of war, a character which opposed the typical soldier ideals; the male characters in novels written

during World War II were often portrayed as strong, ambitious, mentally stable and heterosexual young men who would not succumb to the traumas of battle or the fact that they could be held captive by the enemy until the end of the war; they could be seen to be the epitome of hegemonic masculinity. An example of this stereotypical soldier character can be seen in the novel *Band of Brothers* in the character based on real-life Staff Sergeant Joe Toye, who was described as being “the toughest of the tough”; one can see this in an incident described by the author of *Band of Brothers* Stephen Ambrose, when Sergeant Toye volunteered to capture a German prisoner from No Man’s Land, and came back alive, with a prisoner (Ambrose, 1992: 39). This emboldened the other male characters in his squad, showing that displays of masculine heroics were praised by the people of the era. Another example of a typical soldier character can be seen in the novel *The Bridge over the River Kwai* by Pierre Boulle. The character of Colonel Nicholson, a British Prisoner of War, has a sense of honour which was commonly seen among portrayals of soldiers of that time (Schmidt, 2011: 81). Colonel Nicholson puts his men in danger more than once, most notably when he volunteers them to construct a bridge for their Japanese captors; the character is portrayed as attempting to assert his troop’s “British supremacy” by building “the best bridge possible” (81). Colonel Nicholson states that “the bridge represented the dauntless sort of spirit which never acknowledges defeat but always has some inner resource to draw on as proof of its invincibility” (Boulle, 1954: 94). This “dauntless spirit” could be seen as being a common characteristic among soldiers which were portrayed in World War II literature.

Turning from the theories I have utilised in my dissertation, this section will cover a review of the literature concerning the novels and will discuss the relevance of the secondary material in relation to the three texts and the topic of the dissertation. Kimmel’s work and Connell’s work have provided the main theoretical points in this introduction, as this dissertation will be utilising their theories of hegemonic and homosocial masculinities respectively while applying them to a literary perspective contextualised by the novels. The primary sources used for the novels themselves were very specific, and include articles and some books which proved very useful. One particular book is *James Clavell: A Critical Companion* by Gina MacDonald (1996); the book has biographical elements which are important to the analysis of the novel, and discussions of the central themes, characters and an analysis of the novel *King Rat* which I found to be helpful in that the analysis explores the aspects of honour and its relation to masculinity, something which I will be exploring in the chapter concerning *King Rat*. Rachel LeGault’s article entitled “Issues of Masculinity in

World War II POWs” (2008) is interesting in that it examines a particular aspect of the novel which is intrinsic to the understanding of the POW experiences, the feminisation of the prisoners of war and the reaction of the characters to this feminisation. This aspect of the novel will be discussed further in the chapter focusing on the novel. LeGault’s article was also particularly useful as it focused on *King Rat*, and was not a general analysis of POW texts. Another article which was a useful accompaniment to LeGault’s was Philip Schmidt’s “Under the Wire: How Wartime Prisoners and Their Captors Function in Literature”. Schmidt states that “[...] Clavell’s novel provides examples of how humans, stripped of pretenses, choose to either rebuild these pretenses or rely purely on survival instinct to survive” (2011: 83). LeGault raises a point which I maintain can be related to Schmidt’s statement that the characters in Clavell’s novel could choose to “rebuild pretenses” (83); she speaks of the rape of a character and how, after the rape, the character is portrayed as embracing his “female side” to cope with the trauma of experiencing rape. The rape of *women* is “historically a more general occurrence” (LeGault, 2008: 3), thus the character is portrayed as rebuilding this “pretense”. Schmidt’s article also introduces the idea of microcosms, a “community that is representative of the contemporary world of the literature’s time period” (2011: 80); I found this theory to be applicable to all three texts as each text portrays a community which represents an aspect of the literature of its respective time period.

With regard to *Bitter Eden*, there are three main articles which were utilised, written by Chris Dunton and Cheryl Stobie. Dunton’s article “Tatamkhulu Afrika: The Testing of Masculinity” highlights the author’s pained outlook toward sexuality and homosexuality in men, and also discusses Afrika’s “attachment to place” (2004: 149) and how “place” and “masculinity” relate to one another. This is a focal topic in my analysis of *Bitter Eden*, thus Dunton’s article was fundamental material. Stobie’s article, “Shedding Skins: Metaphors of Race and Sexuality in the Writing of Tatamkhulu Afrika”, introduces the idea of “shedding one’s skin”, something which the protagonist of the story does with regard to his interactions with the men he has relationships with; the “shedding” of the skin also relates to identity which is a focal trope in *Bitter Eden*.

The “grail quest narrative” is something which features heavily in *The Road*, as is explored by Lydia Cooper in her article, “Cormac McCarthy’s *The Road* as Apocalyptic Grail Narrative”; I expand on this later in the introduction and in the chapter concerning the novel

itself. The most important aspect of Cooper's article is the religious concepts she applies to McCarthy's work, and one aspect stood out: "the dying king protecting his kingdom" (Cooper, 2011: 229) – something which is seen throughout the novel. I believe that the boy in the novel represents both the Grail and the vessel of the Grail, and the sickly father is trying to protect his son, thus I use the concept of the "dying king" (a moniker used for the mythical character of the Fisher King). The grail quest can be seen in all three novels, as I elucidate later. The aspect of religion in *The Road* is also explored in an article by Eric Wielenberg. He explores the character of "Ely" in the novel, comparing this character to Elijah from the Old Testament in the Bible; Wielenberg argues that Ely could be seen as a prophet, just as Elijah was. Ely, however, is contradictory in that he is portrayed as having lost his faith, as one can see in his statement, "I'm past all that now. Have been for years. Where men can't live, gods fare no better" (McCarthy, 2006: 172). This loss of faith is an issue which the character of the Father faces too. Wielenberg suggests that "Great suffering appears to constitute evidence against the existence of a loving God, but it also has the capacity to [...] strengthen the belief in such a God" (2010: 3-4); this matter of a struggle of faith is one which I believe is obvious in the character of the Father in *The Road*, and is an aspect which I explore later in my analysis of the novel. Wielenberg's article raises the point that the character of the Father "[...] tries to believe that he is on a divine mission" (4), and this ties in with the grail quest narrative discussed in Cooper's article on *The Road*. Throughout the materials I have used, there is the thread of alternative masculinities as put forward by the authors of the three texts.

In the following sections, I will be discussing briefly what the three novels are about and examining in more detail how the texts relate to the secondary material and the theories I am utilising. *Bitter Eden* is a semi-autobiographical account of a South African man's time in a Prisoner of War camp during World War II (Dunton, 2004: 150). Written by Tatamkhulu Afrika, it explores the interactions among three men and the emotional and physical relationship which eventually develops between two of these men. The entire novel has an undercurrent of homosexual love, which is heightened by the setting of the close confines of the squalid POW camp. This aspect of "love" between men is one of the focal points of this dissertation; often in literature from the era of World War II, tenderness and "love" between men were not written about despite the fact that soldiers formed strong bonds with one another, both on the battlefield and if they were captured by enemy forces. The men who chose to don military uniforms were expected to be strong, heroic men who could handle the

strain of the battlefield; a man such as this was expected to be the “bull goose” – the alpha male.

In *Bitter Eden*, the protagonist is Thomas Aloysius Smythe, a South African soldier who one could say is Afrika’s representation of himself at the time (Dunton, 2004: 150). Thomas suffers from a deep inner turmoil regarding his changing sexual identity. I use the word “changing”, as in the first and last chapters of the novel, Thomas is portrayed as having relationships with women (one being a female prostitute who comments on his lack of arousal during their encounter), yet during the character’s time in the POW camp, he develops strong feelings for another male character named Danny, a man who is a captive in the same camp. These feelings are in opposition to the hegemonic and intensely masculine mindset of the military and South African ideals of maleness. According to Ramon Hinojosa, “traditional constructions of hegemonic masculinities include risk-taking, self-discipline, physical toughness... aggression, violence, emotional control and overt heterosexual desire” (2010: 179). One can clearly see that because of Thomas’s physical attraction to and eventual *love* for another male character, he does not conform to the norms of hegemonic masculinity. The character of Thomas Smythe represents a “subordinate” masculinity, as it is defined by Raewyn Connell as being “made up of men who are completely opposite to the ideals of hegemonic masculinity; they are effeminate, expressive and are sometimes homosexual” (Connell, 2009: 50). The most prominent opposition to hegemonic masculinity that Thomas and his two companions pose is their seeming lack of overt heterosexual desire. This could be attributed to the circumstances of the characters being in extremely close confines with other men, but it is more probable that Afrika is showing the reader that this situation has brought to light his protagonist’s inhibited sexual identity. One could say that the character of Thomas begins the novel as portraying a “complicit” masculinity and ends on a slightly subordinate masculine note.

*King Rat* also highlights the relationships between the male characters; it is also a semi-autobiographical novel and again is set in a Prisoner of War camp in World War II, set this time in the notorious Changi camp (MacDonald, 1996: 31). In this text, the relationships are purely homosocial; the protagonist, British RAF (Royal Air Force) Flight Lieutenant Peter Marlowe, forms a friendship with American Corporal “The King”. Their friendship breaks the boundaries of the internal hegemony seen in the military (Hinojosa, 2010: 180). The two characters do experience a form of “love” for each other. It may not be a homosexual or

erotic love, but it is a connection formed from almost brotherly bonds. This was common amongst soldiers during both of the World Wars, both on and off the battlefield (Goldstein, 2001: 185). The King is only a Corporal whereas Peter Marlowe is an officer, two ranks which would usually not socialise in other circumstances; this hierarchy is disregarded by the characters in favour of a strong bond of male friendship which transcends the “pecking order” of the military. With regard to the “internal hegemony” of the military (Hinojosa, 2010: 180), one can see its effects on the character of Robin Grey, a character who is Peter Marlowe’s adversary and The King’s sworn nemesis. Grey and Marlowe are both British soldiers but because of the ranking system of the military, they are not friendly toward one another. This ranking system is continued in Grey’s character as he is from a “lower class” in society than Marlowe. One could see Grey as portraying “protest masculinity”, a character whom one would define as a “working class man who challenges middle- and upper-class men’s dominance by covertly or openly rejecting their authority” (Hinojosa, 2010: 181). “Protest masculinity” bears similarities to “marginalised masculinity”, in that Grey’s social standing puts him outside of the boundaries of hegemonic masculinity, yet he still ascribes to some of the ideals of hegemonic masculinity. Grey is constantly questioning Marlowe’s authority and decisions, and makes an issue of their class differences in their arguments. This ties in with Connell’s theory that gender is “not isolated, but present in all aspects of society” (Connell, 2009: 5); Grey may have a high rank in the military but his social class causes some of the characters in *King Rat* to look down upon him. The relationship between Robin Grey and Peter Marlowe is fraught with tension because of both their military rank and social standing.

An aspect of social “class” can also be seen in *The Road*, with regard to the division of the “Good Guys” and the “Bad Guys”. The “Good Guys” are the Father and Son characters, but they do not fit the usual vision one has of a “good guy” in that they are not flourishing emotionally or physically, nor are they helping others, as one would expect from a “Good Guy” character. The Father and Son are emaciated, starving and socially isolated, whereas the “Bad Guys” (the ruthless cannibals of *The Road*) are well-fed and often travel in groups of three or more. It would appear that the Father and Son are of a lower social “order” than the “Bad Guys”, as one can see, because the focal characters are treated as mere objects by the other characters; the Father and Son could be seen to be considered simply as food by the “Bad Guys”, creating the mindset of “survival of the fittest” and strongest (a hegemonic ideal) throughout the novel. The most important aspects which will be discussed in *The Road*, are those of fatherhood and the father-and-son relationship dynamic in the novel. The

character of the Father is a subversion of the role divisions usually seen within families portrayed in novels. He plays the roles of both a protective father and a nurturing mother towards the character of his Son, due to the fact that the mother character is absent throughout most of the novel. This dynamic is not often seen in novels which focus on men and post-apocalyptic settings, as usually the male characters are portrayed as “Heroes” with an unemotional attitude toward their circumstances, but the character of the Father is a quiet, loving man whose son is his “world entire” (McCarthy, 2006: 4).

One can see a contrast to this father-son-relationship during post-apocalyptic times in the character of Neville in the novel *I Am Legend* (Matheson, 1954); Neville is isolated from everything and everyone, having to survive on his own without human contact; the character has to rely on his own ingenuity as a man to “stay alive, and not leave-without-a-fight” (Bo, 2013: 29). While the character is portrayed as loathing this solitary existence, he is portrayed as surviving successfully. This isolation and self-reliance contrasts the portrayal of the Father and Son in *The Road*, as the two characters could be seen by some as “less manly [...] or heroic” (29) for having to rely on each other for emotional support, and not being able to survive the post-apocalyptic landscape alone. There is a mother character in the novel but, as was mentioned earlier, she is considered absent, as she commits suicide and abandons her husband and son; this is a very different portrayal of a mother, as the mother character is usually portrayed as the one who cares for the child whilst being protected by the character of the father. One can see that this is a subversion of the norms of hegemonic masculinity and of patriarchal society. The aspect of patriarchy is seen in all three novels, most specifically in *The Road* (although this is more because of the definition being “the rule of fathers” than there being a patriarchal power in ruling position). In *Bitter Eden*, patriarchal rule is highlighted because Tatamkhulu Afrika represents patriarchy’s abhorrence toward homosexuality in the protagonist of the story, who is at loggerheads with himself over his changing sexual identity.

Returning to the trope of fatherhood which is seen throughout the novel *The Road*, one must look at what is expected of a father character: he is the one who is portrayed as the “provider”, the one who feeds his family or those in his care and the one who finds safe shelter for his family. The Father in McCarthy’s post-apocalyptic novel does both for his son, although the food choices they have are meagre at best and a safe structure to abide in is

almost impossible, due to the constant fear the two have of being found and devoured by cannibals.

Father figures are often portrayed to be physically and emotionally strong in dire times. They are the characters whom one expects to find shelter and provisions for the ones in their care. The Father character in *The Road* does follow this stereotype to some degree but for the most part, he is not a typical patriarchal, hegemonic male or father. He is a “lone father” (O’Brien, 1982: 184), a man who “has sole care over his child without interaction from the mother figure” (184). Men who find themselves in this situation subvert the ideals of fatherhood by having to take on the dual roles of both father *and* mother (184); they have to become nurturing and giving and also have to maintain the strict attitude that is considered normal of fathers. The character of the Father in the chosen text could be seen as more of a nurturing presence in his son’s life as opposed to a disciplinary, controlling figure as the Father’s entire existence is devoted to the Son; he literally lives for the boy and each day he puts his son’s needs before his own. These are qualities which are usually associated with maternal characters; McCarthy’s Father character is a man who represents an alternative masculinity to hegemonic masculinity and to patriarchal ideals. With regard to father characters, one must also examine the portrayal of father and son relationships in both *Bitter Eden* and *King Rat*. Tatamkhulu Afrika’s protagonist Thomas has suffered at the hands of his father, enduring sexual abuse which still haunts him in his adult years. This portrayal of a father is one which opposes the idealised representation of fathers in novels. A father is not one who is meant to harm his children; he is one who is meant to protect them from harm in the eyes of both his child and of society, as the Father in *The Road* does for his son. The actions of Thomas’s father contribute to his anguish concerning his sexual identity, as his past draws him closer to his “mate” Danny who claims to have suffered similar abusive treatment, thus creating a bond between the two characters. *King Rat* also raises issues concerning the actions of fathers and how these actions impact on their sons. The father and grandfather of character Peter Marlowe were both upper-class military men (as were James Clavell’s; an important parallel which I will be examining further in my analysis of the novel) and it is this lineage which leads the character to join the military and to fight in World War II (MacDonald, 1996: 41). As one can see, father figures play important roles in the development of male characters, whether the influence of the father is negative or positive. As I mentioned above, fathers are usually portrayed as the “providers” and one provision they are expected to make is that of a safe and secure “home”, a theme found in all three novels.

The ideas of “Home” and of finding a place to call “home” will be discussed in relation to all three novels, as will “homelessness”. The definition of “home” changes vastly, in both physical location and definition for all the male characters in the three novels. Rosemary Marangoly George defines “home”, in the English novel, as being “fixed, rooted, stable[...] the very antidissertation of travel” (1996: 2); this is the exact opposite of what the male characters in *Bitter Eden*, *King Rat* and most prominently *The Road* experience. The soldiers in both *Bitter Eden* and *King Rat* are involved in a war which takes them away from their “home” and “home country”. George suggests that in “the very reference to a ‘home-country’ lies the indication that the speaker is away from home” (1996: 2). In a metaphorical sense, these men could be considered “homeless”, as they have been taken from their homes and placed in a country which they are not familiar with nor welcome in; while the camps provide the men with shelter and food, although the food is little more than scraps of rice and a hint of boiled meat, the men do not and *will* not consider these camps to be “home”. The men in the POW camps are very far removed from their “home” and their “home country”, and this contributes to their feeling of despair and also to the relationships that are built. George also speaks of the binary of “home” and “not home”. According to her, “not home” is considered as being foreign, distant and unknown, while “home” is close and known (1996: 4). The ability to provide a stable and flourishing “home” for himself and for his family, if he has one, is important to a man’s construction of identity; it shows others that he is able to provide a place of safety for those in his care. This could be seen as a patriarchal and a hegemonic viewpoint as it allows the male to have power over others, with regard to where they will live. The character of the Father in *The Road* is unable to provide his Son with a stable, safe home for most of the novel but he does find a bunker in an abandoned yard. The two decide to stay inside this bunker for a few days, as it is filled with unspoiled food, water and has electricity and a chemical toilet. The father is grateful for finding this life saving oasis in a land of ash yet he is still cautious about staying for an extended length of time. One could attribute this to that fact that this shelter does not belong to the Father, thus causing him unease and a sense of failure in himself that this shelter is not something he himself has built or provided, but it is more probable that the Father character’s depicted anxiety is toward the safety of the character of his Son. The Father and Son could be considered to be physically homeless, but emotionally they consider each other to be a symbolic “Home”; the Son is seen as both the Grail and a *vessel*, or “home” for the Grail by his father, as stated by Lydia

Cooper in her article concerning *The Road* (2011: 229), and the Father represents safety and shelter for the boy, as he knows no other people or way of life.

This trope of a grail quest is applied to all three novels in this dissertation, as it relates in some degree to all three texts. The grail quest is, in general, considered to be a masculine narrative; one could say that Quest narratives, whether Grail or not, are usually masculine, as the origin of the Quest Narrative could be seen to be the myth of King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table; the knights under King Arthur's command go on what is considered the "greatest quest of all" – to search for the Holy Grail, the chalice used by Jesus at the Last Supper. Every person who attempts the grail quest is male, bringing to the myths a sense of underlying sexism (Lacy, 1986: 295). The knights are said to fail in their quest, and this angers King Arthur as he realizes it means the weakening of his kingdom Camelot, but a young man by the name of Parsifal emerges and volunteers to undertake the quest himself, in the legend of "Parsifal and the Fisher King". The Fisher King keeps in his castle the Holy Chalice and the Holy Spear, two items which are necessary to bring the "light of God" to the castle and the kingdom; according to the myth, the Holy Spear is stolen and the Fisher King is wounded in his genitalia, which causes his inability to retrieve the spear himself. It is interesting to note that once the Fisher King's genitalia are wounded, the entire surrounding kingdom falls into disarray, with "the meadows and flowers [...] dried up and the waters shrunken" (Sanderson, 2007: 1). One could see this meaning that the genitals of a man are at the core of manhood and power – they are a physical representation of a man's masculinity and "maleness" (2007: 1). Parsifal is the young knight who must save the decaying kingdom and the wounded king, and so he goes on a quest to retrieve the Holy Spear (2). He is a knight, the epitome of Medieval society's ideals of what a man should be. Parsifal faces many trials on his quest to retrieve the Holy Spear, at one stage defeating a rival, higher-ranking knight and donning the armour this knight was wearing. This could be seen to represent a young man overcoming an obstacle in his life, or facing up to authority to claim his own masculine "independence". One can deduce from the myth of "Parsifal and the Fisher King" that grail quest narratives are androcentric, as most of the characters in the myth are male, with the exception of a young maiden whom Parsifal "deflowers" (4); her inclusion in the myth as simply an object of desire further reiterates the argument that Grail narratives are masculine. One can also see the obvious masculinity of the Grail narrative in the fact that the "Grail" itself is thought to be a chalice, or a vessel, something which is representative of

femininity – as it is a “receiver” of the “sword” of the male partaking on the quest, the “sword” being a phallic representation of masculinity.

The grail quest narrative can be seen clearly in *The Road*, as Cooper mentions in her article as the two male characters are on a physical and emotional journey towards one specific point, the coast and safety from the morally corrupt cannibals whom they have encountered. The grail quest narrative theory could be applied to all fathers as they journey with their sons toward perfect manhood and masculinity through the trials of life. The grail narrative relates specifically to *Bitter Eden*, as the protagonist, Thomas Smythe, is undergoing an emotional quest to discover his sexual identity. He undergoes turmoil and tests, much like one would if one were on a physical quest, although his “tests” are much more subtle. An example of a test, or rather *choice* Thomas must make is seen in the incident where the men in the camp are made to sleep outside after the humiliation of having their pubic hairs clipped to stop the spread of lice. Thomas tells Douglas, his unwanted but stubbornly caring “mate”, that he will be sleeping next to Danny, the man he would truly rather be “mates” with. Danny says to Thomas, after they have both become as comfortable as possible, “You chose tonight” (Afrika, 2002: 105). During the course of a grail narrative, the protagonist is faced with many life-changing choices and this could be seen as an important choice made by Thomas on his quest to sexual and self-discovery. In *King Rat*, the grail narrative is not as overt as in the previously mentioned novels, but it does occur in the novel. The character of the King is on a metaphorical quest to assert dominance over the other characters with whom he shares the camp. There is an aspect of physical “journey” in the novel, as the King and Peter Marlowe do travel to a village in order to have dealings with the locals; this is an extremely dangerous liaison, as the Japanese guards would surely execute or torture the two if they were discovered outside the walls of Changi. With regard to the grail quest theory, this journey outside of camp walls is a trial most befitted to a character on a quest.

With regard to emotional journeys experienced by the male characters in *Bitter Eden* and *King Rat*, one must also examine male hysteria and PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) in the characters. According to Michael Roper, the soldiers who fought in both World Wars experienced extreme physical and emotional stress, as they witnessed harrowing carnage on the battlefield and in POW camps (2009: 7). Hysteria is a term usually reserved for women, and is defined as being “unmanageable emotional excess” and originates from the Greek word *hysteria*, which translates as “womb” (Oxford Complete Wordfinder, 1990: 736), thus

creating in people's minds the misconception that hysteria is a female ailment. Hysteria in soldiers returning from or still engaging in battle during World War II was largely ignored by physicians and doctors of the time, due to the fact that hysteria was stigmatised as being a feminine malady. Thus it was not a "patriotic" or "militaristic" diagnosis (Roper, 2009: 7) and did not conform to the ideal of a strong, masculine soldier. Men suffering from hysteria and shell shock were treated barbarically by physicians in order to cure their ailment. The explanation behind "cures" practised by doctors such as Lewis Yealland, who once continuously electrocuted the tongue of a young man who refused to speak after returning from battle, was that if one had to use strong force on hysterical *women* then one would have to double this force when dealing with hysterical men, as men were "not supposed to show weakness" (Showalter, 1985: 178) and were assumed to be physically and emotionally superior and stronger than women.

A character who experiences extreme hysteria is Douglas in *Bitter Eden*; he is portrayed as becoming frenzied with jealousy over the relationship between Thomas and Danny, and attacks Thomas in a distressing final encounter between the two. He demonstrates an "unmanageable emotional excess" (1990: 736) and, much like a hysterical woman, as a hysterical man, Douglas is perceived as being "simple, emotional, unthinking" (Roper, 2009: 5). His emotional breakdown is caused by an amalgamation of issues: the conditions of the camp, the scolding by Thomas and the ridicule by the other characters in the camp regarding his intense attachment to Thomas. Douglas, at the end of his short and turbulent time in the camp, is portrayed as a parody of an effeminate man and is seen as scarcely a man at all by the other male characters. In *King Rat*, Sean, the character who is portrayed as a man who almost *becomes* a woman also experiences a mild form of hysteria, or "shell shock". I use the phrase "becomes a woman" owing to the fact that he is taught by two veteran actors in the camp how to act, dress and almost to think like a woman. At first, he tries to "crush the woman" in himself (Clavell, 1975: 234) but after a second rape attempt, he declares, "'I'm not fighting it any more' [...] 'You wanted me to be a woman, now they believe I am one [...] Inside I feel I *am* one, so there's no need to pretend any more. I *am* a woman'" (234). Later, Sean commits suicide by drowning himself in the ocean after dressing up as a woman for one last time. This shows a form of "unmanageable emotional excess" in that his mental turmoil drives Sean to kill himself, and shows that he is experiencing hysteria. A mild form of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder can be seen in the character of the Father in *The Road*. He is emotionally withdrawn and in shock at the "event" which brought him and his Son to their

current situation. In some sufferers of PTSD, emotional withdrawal is a major symptom and can often contribute to their physical decline (Roper, 2009: 10), which one can see in the Father, although his physical decline is mostly linked to the scarce food sources available. It is evident that all three novels have characters that undergo severe mental and emotional stress; often in literature concerning male characters in dire situations, the males are portrayed as being strong, stable and capable and their reaction to their circumstances is to simply endure it, as a hegemonic masculine male would, but the characters in the three novels compared in this dissertation subvert this ideal and create male characters who are able to show their emotions.

Male characters who undergo PTSD or male hysteria are not looked upon in a favourable light by society and one could see that this is because they are opposing hegemonic masculinity by succumbing to their feelings and allowing themselves to react with emotion to their situations. It is interesting to note that in post-war literature, male authors often did not write many novels concerning PTSD, shell shock or male hysteria; it was mostly a topic covered by female authors (Showalter, 1985:192). Showalter argues that this is because women had more knowledge on the subject of hysteria and emotional distress and thus could create male characters suffering from these emotions which were more realistic than the previous, patriotic portrayal of a soldier who returns an “officer and a gentleman” (1985:193), a man who returned home not scarred by the war, but stronger because of his experiences.

The aspect of returning “home” is one which resonates through all three novels, particularly to *Bitter Eden* and *King Rat*, as the Father and Son in *The Road* do not have a physical home to return to but are seeking a metaphorical “home” which will end their quest. With regard to the novels concerning World War II, one must look at the reception returning soldiers received from the public. As mentioned above, the literature regarding the soldier’s return was a topic which had more female authors, as male authors during this era preferred to portray the men as patriotic upon return (1985:193), but this was not the reality. They were allotted “small pensions” and returned with “shaky nerves to face unemployment, the moribund patriotism of elderly clubmen and generals” (192). The men returning home would face a welcome which would leave a bitter taste in their mouths, and one can understand why many men changed upon returning home from war. The end of *King Rat* places the male characters in this dilemma; they have been rescued from a hellish prison camp, only to return

to a society and world they would not feel at ease in. A poignant sentence from Clavell's novel summarises the point I am suggesting, "That night the third and last and greatest fear crucified Changi. Fear of tomorrow [...] The future had to be faced. The future outside of Changi. The future was *now*. Now" (311). The men are grateful to be rescued but now realise that they will have to return to society and to the judging eyes of the people "back Home" (312); the rescuing soldiers have already made cruel judgment upon seeing the characters in the POW camp, exclaiming in disgust at their skeletal frames and makeshift clothing and doling out "pity" using phrases such as "poor swines" when speaking of the survivors (311). It was judgments such as this which added to the mental instability experienced by many returning soldiers, both in reality and in literature.

The protagonist of *Bitter Eden* also experiences difficulty when returning "home", as the man he comes to love does not have the same "home" as he does; this means that Thomas will have to abandon someone about whom he truly cares in order to return to a "close and known" home (George, 1996: 4) which will eventually become "not home", due to his experiences in the POW camp. The character of the Father in McCarthy's novel does return to the house he once lived in, before the "event" of the novel, but does not feel any sense of closure upon doing this. His "home" has now become "not home" as the definition of "home" has changed since the events in the text and also because he has no more emotional attachment to the structure. One can see that the male characters in all three novels feel a sense of foreboding and apprehension at the thought of returning "home", as they have become so attached to their surroundings and situations that they no longer know exactly where home is.

As one can see, the portrayal of men in literature set in times of crisis has changed. Male characters are no longer simply portrayed as being hegemonic and patriarchal but are presented as characters showing alternative emotions and reactions to their situations. They are characters who are able to show to the reader that men have feelings, and are able to represent these feelings in a way which opposes the usual "stiff upper lip" attitude society shows toward male emotions. The authors of *Bitter Eden*, *King Rat* and *The Road* offer the reader viable alternative masculinities to the conventional hegemonic masculine stereotype often seen in novels in which male characters are central figures.

## Chapter One

### *Bitter Eden*

#### I Will Stand By You: Homosocial and Homosexual Relationships between Men In and Out of Prison Camps

In this chapter I will be discussing the novel *Bitter Eden* by Tatamkhulu Afrika. The subjects which will be considered are the relationships between the protagonist and the characters in the novel, both homosocial and intimate. The lack of any substantial female characters will also be examined, in relation to the underlying theme of same-sex attraction, which one can see in the novel. The conditions of the Prisoner of War camp as portrayed in the novel will also be taken into account when the interactions, relationships and psychological reactions of the characters are examined as will the manner in which the characters are depicted as defying the norms of hegemonic masculinity. The relationships between the male characters will be examined in more depth than the lack of female characters, as these relationships are focal to the chapter.

*Bitter Eden* is the story of the relationships between men who would ordinarily consider themselves heterosexual but, due to being confined in the horrific conditions of a Prisoner of War camp, begin to experience conflicting emotions towards their own and each other's sexuality. The novel "explores the relationship between men who do not identify as being homosexual" (Stobie, 2007: 186). Love between men is a taboo topic, as love and emotion are not typically expressed by men towards others, particularly to other men (Connell, 2002: v). Expressions of love or affection toward a member of the same sex are not considered to be a desired masculine trait. During times of war, men were and are expected to be "uber-masculine", to be the ultimate example of a man and soldier. For men who are not as "macho" or do not have the strong male personality of many of the other army enlistees, the forced masculinity of war can be extremely daunting. War is a time of extreme emotional and physical crisis, as are POW camps; the violence the men witness both on the battlefield and in the camps affects them on a deep psychological level (Goldstein, 2001: 185).

Afrika writes at length about the bonding between men and about his own intense relationships with men throughout his life, as can be seen in the autobiography *Mr Chameleon*. A triangular relationship arises between three men in a Prisoner of War camp (Stobie, 2005: 189) in *Mr Chameleon* and to describe this relationship, Afrika uses words such as “seducer” and “cuckolding” (189). Stobie states that these terms highlight the “intensity” of the relationship (189), a statement with which I concur, as the word “seducer” has connotations of a person or character who leads another person or character astray, and in some instances a “seducer” leads another character to have sexual relations with him or her, which I feel is the double meaning in Afrika’s use of the word. As the term “cuckolding” is usually used in relation to a husband and wife, Afrika’s usage of the term suggests an intimate relationship which exceeds the bounds of friendship. The focal tropes of Afrika’s novel, *Bitter Eden*, are sexuality and friendship between men. He speaks of the “blood-link” between men (189) and says that he “does not think that male bonding is the rugged, virginal affection between males that many books and the cinema screens would have us believe” (Afrika, 2005: 49).

I use this statement as a link to *Bitter Eden*, as the males in this particular text do not share the innocent camaraderie that some films and novels portray men to have, particularly men at war. The protagonist of the novel, Thomas Smythe is befriended by an English man, Douglas; he wishes to make Thomas his “mate” and thus mothers him and fusses over him as if they were in a relationship, rather than simply friends. Tom stays close to Douglas despite his irritation toward the man, because he is reluctantly grateful to have been found and “nurtured” by such an intuitive and capable man, especially in a situation where those character traits would have been a welcome quality and would have eventually become a necessity (Dunton, 2004: 152).

Douglas is seen as a burden, an irritation to Tom; an effeminate presence whom Tom despises. Before the war, Douglas worked as a male nurse, as Tom finds out. This revelation causes Tom’s mind to “change gears” with the “grinding reluctance” that is similar to the “Ite trucks” into which they are forced to pile (Afrika, 2002: 21); this “changing of gears” in Tom’s mind could be seen as him assuming that, because Douglas was a male nurse, Douglas must be same-sex inclined. A scene which I consider to illustrate the tense and turbulent relationship between Tom and Douglas takes place before the POW camp. The Italian soldiers have stopped their trucks at a spring, and have let the male characters out to drink

from it; the emaciated men run rapturously toward the pool, Douglas and Tom included, and drink their fill. When the men have been herded back onto the “Ite” trucks, Douglas shows his true sensitivity to Tom: “I suppose you don’t think much of me any more,” he at last says [...] “What the fuck are you talking about?” I snap [...] “About the way I behaved at the spring [...] I left you behind. I never once thought about you. I thought only of myself” (25). This exchange angers Tom greatly. He believes Douglas to be mothering him, as he says to the character, and Douglas retorts by saying, “Why did you say *mothering*? After a fight between Douglas and Tom, in which they “break up” (113) Douglas moves from their hut into the hut which the theatre troupe shares. This move is significant in that it shows that Douglas chose to live with a group of characters who are perceived by the other men in the novel as having same-sex tendencies. Tony, the “leader” of this group says to Tom, after he has come to inquire about Douglas, that Tom does not need to worry because they “look after their own” (114). This implies that the group has accepted Douglas as “one of their own” – a queer-inclined man. The attitude of Tony has changed toward Douglas: when he taunts Tom about him earlier in the novel, Tony says he “hates him”, and when Tom asks why, Tony states that Douglas is “like a sister that has left the tribe” (57). Once again, it is alluded to that Douglas is a man with same-sex attractions. By the end of the novel, Douglas experiences shell-shock, something which many soldiers went through during war time, especially those who had been captured and moved to POW camps. According to Elaine Showalter, shell-shock was both “perceived and experienced as emasculating and effeminising its subjects” (1984: 181). Douglas is portrayed as having “blood-loss’ blue-white pallor overlaid with smudging mascara and other goo [...] the once fussed-with, always washed brown hair [...] running wild” (Afrika, 2002: 161). One can clearly see here that Douglas’s appearance is symbolic of a mad *woman* rather than of a male character portraying symptoms of PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder); he is emasculated by his experience. The term “shell-shock” was used during WWI, and reflected an assumed link between the symptoms and the effects from artillery shell explosions, as it was thought that the carbon-monoxide caused the psychological symptoms. This argument, however, was deemed unsatisfactory as many of the men experiencing “shell-shock” had been nowhere near an exploding artillery shell, thus creating the need for an alternative argument that it was, in fact, an emotional ailment (Jones et al, 2007: 1642). The term “battle fatigue” was coined during WWII in order to seemingly lessen the brevity of the diagnosis, but the term has since become obsolete and PTSD is more widely used (1642).

Soldiers who experienced shell-shock or “male hysteria” (Roper, 2009: 7) were seen as “simple, emotional, unthinking [...] and weak” (7), characteristics which the portrayal of Douglas illustrates. Shell-shocked soldiers were not seen as having the attributes of ideal hegemonic males, thus they were viewed as “less than men” (Showalter, 1984: 181). Douglas becomes a grotesque parody of a gay man, a reaction to being confined in a POW camp, in which a man’s sexuality is almost always in question by the other camp residents. Shell-shock was considered to be similar to the ancient condition “hysteria” experienced by women. “Hysteria” was seen by doctors as a “female disorder”. It was perceived to be caused by the “wandering womb” which would cause a woman to act in a manner which was considered unacceptable by society (Roper, 2009: 8). The fact that doctors believed “hysteria” to be a female disorder led to the belief that shell-shock was “feminine behaviour in male subjects” (8). This belief was maintained according to Showalter’s interpretation that war neurosis is a gendered diagnosis because, historically, hysteria was considered to be a *female* disorder (8), the explanation of which has been given by the above statements; had it not been considered to be a disorder affecting women, the relationship between gender, shell-shock and medicine would not have been a convincing argument. When soldiers showed signs of experiencing shell-shock, they were considered “less than men [...] displaying feminine characteristics” (Roper, 2009: 6). Douglas becomes crazed with jealousy over the relationship between Tom and Danny (a “symptom” of his shell-shock), and most certainly, the squalid setting of the POW camp is a contributing factor toward this mental breakdown. He loses all signs of masculinity, becoming a hysterical and emotionally destroyed being. His inevitable physical attack on Tom is portrayed as if Douglas is a crazed lover, fuelled by jealousy and rejection – not emotions usually outwardly shown by men, unless in a state of emotional distress, such as shell-shock.

Danny, the instigator of the triangular relationship of the novel, at first seems to take Tom under his masculine “wing”, so to speak; at first glance, it would appear that Danny simply wants to become friends with Tom for the same reasons Tom has remained friends with Douglas – out of necessity, but, eventually, a sexual and somewhat *romantic* relationship blooms between the two men. The very first indication of a physical relationship occurs between Danny and Tom whilst they are huddled together for body warmth, in one bunk, during a particularly bitter winter. Danny is masturbating with his back turned to Tom. At first, Tom is shocked but then realises that Danny’s “grappling with himself” has been continuing for an unusual amount of time (Afrika, 2002: 182). He feels “compelled by a

force” outside of himself and thus reaches over to Danny and commences to take over, pleasing Danny as the “phantom woman never can” (183). This action metamorphosises their relationship which was, at best, a stifled and suppressed attraction, into one that could be considered a homosexual relationship between two men. Tom has acted out of the love he feels for Danny; finally this love that has been veiled in the facade of homosocial friendship, and fraught with sexual tension, manifests itself in a sexual act that could be considered as femininely tender. Afrika speaks of such acts in the prison camps, saying that “the love that at another time and place would have fled the stares of righteously affronted men, swans with but a flimsy covering through our sad dormitories for the lonely and deprived”, as quoted in Stobie’s article, “Mother, Missus, Mate: Bisexuality in Tatamkhulu Afrika’s *Mr Chameleon* and *Bitter Eden*”. I highlight here the word “love” – it is used instead of *lust*, which is significant. The men in the POW camps “adapted as best they could to a life they had never envisaged” (Stobie, 2005: 197), and this included, aside from the mental and physical changes they would have had to undergo, the need to find some form of emotional attachment and stability. Often, this resulted in affection between the men, both sexual and emotional, and love did eventually bloom, as one can see with Tom and Danny.

Their sexual tension arises again in another physical interaction, but this incident takes place outside of the POW camp. The men have been rescued from the German soldiers and, while waiting for their orders, Danny and Tom begin to wrestle as if in celebration of their freedom. Danny pronounces the rather loaded sentence of “Free to do as we fucking well want!” (212). One could see this as a vindication of the feelings he has been hiding from and for Tom, feelings which could not be freely shown whilst in the walls of the camp. The wrestling match turns into something different from a simple game between two good friends, it becomes sexually charged and ends with the physical climax of both men. It is obvious that the sexual element of the relationship is heightened by the wrestling, as Tom describes it as becoming “no longer a childish game” that has developed into “the oldest game of all” (212). Tom is of course alluding to sexual intercourse, yet he tries to deny this to both Danny and himself, by saying, “Look we wrestled and we were randy, so we came. That is *all*. I didn’t bugger you and you didn’t bugger me like so many of the guys in the camps were doing all the time. We were free and we were happy fit to bust. So we bust and now you’re wanting me to slash my wrists? For *that*? Get lost!” (213). Tom is emphasising the masculine action of wrestling rather than accepting that they are in fact sexually attracted to each other, and were engaging in a veiled form of foreplay.

Michael Kimmel raises the point that it is not “women as corporeal beings but the ‘idea’ of women, of femininity – and most especially a perception of effeminacy by other men – that animates men’s actions. Femininity, separate from actual women, can become a negative pole against which men define themselves” (1996: 7). This point can be applied to the manner in which Douglas is portrayed when the character displays shell-shock; he is seen by Thomas as feminine because he is experiencing and displaying emotions which are usually portrayed by female characters. Kimmel goes on to say that the “evaluative eyes of other men are always upon us, watching, judging [...] [E]very soldier fears ‘losing the one thing he is likely to value more highly than life – his reputation as a *man among other men*’” (7). Douglas is a male character who is depicted as losing this reputation, something which could be considered focal to having a homosocial relationship with another man. Homosocial masculinity, whilst celebrating the “camaraderie, fellowship and intimacy” experienced in male culture (8), includes homophobia. One may consider the aspect of homophobia as not entirely applicable to the protagonists of *Bitter Eden*, as they are characters who are portrayed as experiencing same sex attraction to each other, but there are obvious incidents which illustrate that Thomas and Danny are homophobic. It is not unusual for people of the LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender) community to experience internalised homophobia, as Thomas and Danny clearly do, as LGBT individuals are subject to the same prejudices as the rest of society. Internalised homophobia can lead to self-loathing. The portrayal of self-loathing by a man who desires a man of the same sex can be seen in a large body of Afrika’s work, most particularly in *Bitter Eden*. One can also see this self-loathing in Afrika’s other writing in a scene from his novel *The Vortex*, in which the main character, Johnny is offered sex by his close male friend’s lover; the character finds the female lover unattractive but when he pictures his male friend engaged sexually with the woman, he becomes aroused. This arousal disgusts Johnny, as he realises he is not aroused by the *female* character but by “the skin of him to whom she belonged” – the arousal he feels is for a *male* and this is upsetting to the main male protagonist, as Stobie notes (Stobie, 2007: 156). Dunton maintains that Afrika’s work has a “power” because he explores the “yearning on the part of his male characters to dissolve their sense of alienation and to achieve sympathetic or comradely bonding with other males” (2004: 155). He also states that “it is the tension between this desire and a character’s often shocking revulsion at his own psyche and corporeality” that makes Afrika’s work compelling (155). In *Bitter Eden*, Afrika explores the internal homophobia experienced by men who are attracted to, or desire an intimate relationship with other men. Thomas and

Danny experience this internalised homophobia, thus maintaining my argument that, although the characters of Thomas and Danny are portrayed as having an attraction to a member of the same sex, they display an internal homophobia both towards themselves and to other characters.

A conversation takes place in the camp between Thomas, Danny and a character named Camel (who is the camp's "artist"; he paints the other characters nude). Camel questions Thomas as to why he has not told Danny that he wishes to paint him, and Danny overhears this conversation. He asks Camel, "So, how, then would you be seeing *me* if I said OK?", to which Camel replies "Naked and playing with your prissy little balls!" (Afrika, 2002: 89). Danny is shown as being enraged by this reply and promptly punches Camel in the face. Danny then says to Thomas, "If this is the kind of friends you keep, then you are not one of mine" (89). One can see here that Danny holds contempt and hostility toward even the mere suggestion of homosexuality from other men. Kimmel puts forward the idea that homophobia is the "fear of other men – that other men will unmask us, emasculate us, reveal to the world that we do not measure up, are not real men [...] like the young man in a poem by Yeats, 'one that ruffles in a manly pose for all his timid heart'" (8). I argue that Danny and Thomas are homophobic in that Kimmel's description of homophobia applies to their view of other male characters in the camp. Danny lashes out at Camel because he feels that Camel has emasculated him in front of another male character.

Thomas's homophobia is more internal than an external attitude toward the "funnies" of the camp. He intones to himself, regarding his attraction to Danny, "Am I one of *them*? Am I in love with a *man*?" (Afrika, 2002: 95); the character "beats these questions back with the desperation of one under siege" (95), which illustrates that the character's homophobia is so ingrained that he refuses to allow even himself to have thoughts which could be construed as "homosexual". Thomas also creates in his mind an image of homosexual intercourse which is "grubby-minded" in order to "frighten" himself "back into the cosy strait-jacket" in which he was "born and raised" (95). Kimmel theorises that men try to "control themselves; they project their fears onto others; and when feeling too pressured, they attempt an escape" (9). One can see that Thomas is attempting an escape from his homosexual thoughts by imagining how disgusting homosexual intercourse is, in order to remain – in his own mind – a "straight" man. Comments made by other characters in the novel also irk Thomas, as they quite clearly allude to his intimate relationship, first with Douglas and then with Danny. The very first

comment passed, by an unnamed character, who is later revealed as Danny, occurs before the men arrive at the POW camp, “‘He your mate?’ and there is a slight emphasis on the word ‘mate’ that does get my goat” (Afrika, 2002: 26). Here, the use of the word “mate” is fraught with meaning, and this displeases Thomas as it suggests that he may be homosexual, an alignment which he fears and despises. Another incident which sparks anger in Thomas is when Tony, the character who is in charge of the makeshift theatre in the Italian camp, is cutting his hair and passes a snide comment about Thomas and Douglas, saying, “‘How’s the wife?’”, to which Thomas protests “‘Cut that, Tony! You know Douglas is not like that’” (56); this causes Tony to reply with significant words “‘Like what? Give it a name, man. You are old enough to say the word’” (56). Thomas’s reaction to the insinuation that his “mate” Douglas may be gay highlights his homophobia – he does not wish to even be *associated* with someone who could be mistaken as homosexual, and so defends himself and protests against the insinuations of other characters. Thomas’s homophobia toward Tony is also portrayed as somewhat internal, as Afrika portrays Thomas as “inwardly shrinking from his touch” when receiving a haircut from the character of Tony; this is done out of the fear that Tony may take advantage of his “defencelessness whilst in the chair” and “grab” Thomas “where he must not” (56). One can clearly see here how Kimmel’s description of homophobia is applicable to Thomas, as Thomas sees Tony’s touch as emasculating, and emasculation by another man forms part of Kimmel’s definition of homophobia.

Despite the fact that Tom shows signs of homophobia towards Tony and the rest of the theatre troupe, he does take part in a play in which he portrays a female character, that of Lady Macbeth. He is at first extremely reluctant when offered the role by Tony, quipping, “‘Do *you* think I’m one of your stage pervs that’s going to prance around on that stage in a fucking *dress*?’” (Afrika, 2002: 137). The reaction of Tom is portrayed as being full of anger and the words he uses such as “perv” and “prance” illustrate his homophobia toward Tony. Tom does, however, accept the role, which one can see as a direct contradiction to his portrayed homophobia. His portrayal of Lady Macbeth is very successful and causes Tony to be close to “weeping” (149), yet Tom still displays disgust toward the idea that he has depicted a woman on stage. One can see this in his words as he is removing his costume after the play; Danny has come to see him after the play and Tom, whilst taking off his “dress”, says to Danny, “‘Let me just get rid of these tits,’” referring to the false breasts he wore during the play (150). Later, on a cold night after the play, Tom and Danny have climbed into a bunk together to get body warmth; Tom is portrayed as waking up with an “erection as

pushy as a tusk” and sneaks out to the toilets to “slyly masturbate”. While he is performing this action, Tom attempts to persuade himself that “Queen or no Queen”, he is still as “much of a male” as he “ever was” (152). One can see here his disdain toward same-sex attraction and towards displaying any qualities which could be misconstrued as same-sex attraction.

An important aspect of Tatamkhulu Afrika’s semi-autobiographical novel is that of “attachment to place”, as Chris Dunton speaks about in his article “Tatamkhulu Afrika: The Testing of Masculinity” (149). A quotation from this article summarises the point which I am arguing, as Dunton describes the emotions of the men being: “I desire and/or have a right to belong here, and yet sense and/or am told I do not” (Dunton, 2004: 150). This relates to the prisoners of war in that they are experiencing a sense of geographical and psychological “limbo”; the men do not *belong* in or to the country in which they are imprisoned yet desire to have a connection to or feel at home *somewhere*. “Place” and “belonging” are important to these men and indeed to men universally, as these are ideas and aspects which they can control and can identify themselves by. If their “place” or “home” is taken from them, they will become unsettled and unsure of themselves (both as men and as people), and may lose their sense of self.<sup>1</sup> Many of the men in POW camps became neurotic and possibly psychotic as a result of the pressure they felt from being in an unfamiliar, uninviting and uncontrollable place. A Prisoner of War camp could be described as a microcosm – a small place within a place – which could lead to the confusion of the characters, as the camp is in an unfamiliar country and is *itself* unfamiliar, yet the characters are forced by their circumstances to consider the microcosm of the camp as “home”.

The men in the novel *Bitter Eden* are moved from Libya, to Italy and finally are forced to march in gruelling conditions to Germany, further reinforcing to them that their “place”, and therefore “home”, is unstable and temporary. I use inverted commas here around the word *place* because, for the POWs, “place” is only an idea, for they do not truly belong in Libya, Italy or Germany; they are merely passing through on to their next torturous experience. The men are transported on a ship to “Mussoliniland” (Afrika, 2002: 28), a colloquial slur for Italy, and this ship is another clear example of “place” and the men’s lack of permanent

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<sup>1</sup> Afrika notes this himself, saying that “at the [...] psychological core of every prison experience, *wherever* it may occur, is the same three-headed monster of stasis, abandon[ment] and despair”, a quote from *Mr Chameleon* which Stobie notes in her article, “Mother, Missus, Mate: Bisexuality in Tatamkhulu Afrika’s *Mr Chameleon* and *Bitter Eden*”.

residence. Thomas and his unwanted companion, Douglas, are forced down into the “cavernous hull” of the ship (34); a place which is dark, dank and is permeated with the stench of excrement and unwashed bodies. Tom describes the only source of light from a hatch above them, as being “as distant and surreal as the mouth of a well” (34). I believe that he uses this comparison of a “well” to the cavernous hull he and Douglas find themselves in to illustrate the utter loss of hope that they feel at their circumstances. A well is a deep, watery pit, which is dangerous and unwelcoming, as is the ship they are forced to remain upon until their arrival in Italy. Despite these horrifying conditions, however, the men endure and seem to be somewhat calm (even with some having severe dysentery and nausea), and I believe this is because the men now have a “place” they can consider their own: the ship. They can now identify themselves, and find a way to be in control of their “place”. Douglas, Tom’s nuisance of a “mate”, does just this, by nagging for a “more distant space” for the two men, away from the other sickly inhabitants of the ship (35). This illustrates a man’s need to have his own space for himself, a space he can call his own, for even a short amount of time. Another incident in the novel which further illustrates the idea of “home” and “place” is when – after Tom and Douglas catch and punish the man who has been stealing the prisoners’ boots and selling them to the Italian soldiers – Tom can finally sleep, as he feels an “illusion of stability enfolding” him in the “at last, established camp” (37). Again, the fact that the camp has become “established” and is in a stable location has calmed the men somewhat. The camp itself has amenities and services similar to what one would find in everyday life; there is a makeshift theatre and even a barber. Tom describes to the man who will become his other “mate”, Danny, where the barber shop is. I feel that the fact that there is a barber “shop” (hut would be a more suitable term) within the camp, further reiterates how important it was to these men that they be in a stable place, a place which echoes of their original “place” and “home”, with reminders of their life before the war.

Regarding the idea of place and “home”, I turn to a book by Rosemary Marangoly George. She states that “location” is an important aspect when one considers the idea of *home*. George believes that in “the very reference to a ‘home-country’ lies the indication that the speaker is away from home” (George, 1996: 2); POWs had no stable location on which to base their idea of “home”. George puts forward the argument that “the distance from the very location that one strives to define is [...] intrinsic to the definition that is reached” (2). I believe this applies directly to the soldiers in *Bitter Eden*, as they are moved to so many differing locations that their own ideas of “home”, their very definition of “home”, completely

changes. In her book, George speaks about binarism, and I focus on her theory of “Home” and “Not-Home” (4). “Not Home” is related to, or is seen as being, foreign or distant whereas “Home” is close and known. For the soldiers in Afrika’s novel, “Not Home” is the prison camp in Libya, Italy and the eventual “refugee camp” in Germany; the men are distanced from where they were born and raised, and from the places they consider to be “home”. The men do come to consider these squalid camps “Home”, after a time, as they come to know the camps and identify themselves with these camps. The characters in the camp may come to consider the camp as “home”, because they have been confined to it and therefore have to adapt to the surroundings, but their sense of “belonging” does not return, as the country in which they are imprisoned is not their “home country”, thus they will never truly “belong” in the camp.

Belonging and “home” are two concepts which one can see are linked in *Bitter Eden* (Dunton, 2004: 150), as one can see how important a sense of “belonging” and a “home” are to the characters. “Home” is where one builds an identity, and along with this identity one’s sexuality is discovered and built upon. Afrika’s work interlinks the concepts of sexuality and belonging, and along with these, the issue of alienation (150). One can see this in the fact that, despite the disgust Thomas is shown to have towards Douglas, Thomas remains Douglas’s reluctant companion, as he does not wish to alienate himself; one could say Thomas is wishing to achieve a “sympathetic or comradely bonding with other males” (155). This craving for a bond with another male is brought about by the dire situation of the characters, but one could see it as an indication of Afrika’s disdain toward hegemonic masculinity, as he has chosen to create characters that are both homosocially masculine and homosexual. The relationship between sexuality and “belonging” also relates to the idea of “home”, as “home” and sexuality – and often identity – are often closely linked. “Home” could be seen as the place where a man forms his identity, the place where his ideas towards society are formed; Thomas and the other male characters are forced away from their “home”, thus their identities are allowed to shift and change, as one can see in the protagonist. This identity change occurs because the characters are no longer at “home” and so have nothing to ground their identities upon. The connection between sexuality and “place” is continued in the novel when one notes that Thomas, once freed from the POW camp, is portrayed as feeling fear toward the “possibility of exploration, expression and commitment that freedom might allow” with regard to his and Danny’s *true* relationship (158). Thomas is shown as choosing to return home to South Africa rather than to remain

with Danny, showing that the idea of “home” has impacted his choice of both sexual and personal identity. It is important to note that Thomas never returns to Danny, symbolising how the hegemonic ideals of Thomas’s “home” impacted on his choices later in life, regarding his homosexuality. One must note that, despite Afrika’s protagonist’s choosing to live an assumed heterosexual existence after the war, he compares the separation of two such intimate characters, from two different countries, “akin to the cutting off from one’s self a living flesh” (Stobie, 2005: 190); this again shows that place and belonging affect the relationship between the characters and also their choice of sexuality.

“Home” also signifies the place where one’s family is (George, 1996: 2). For Danny, “home” includes his wife, who has been waiting for him to return from his wartime duties and satiate her “needs”; Thomas is shown a letter from Danny’s wife which reads, “I am only human, you know. I am a woman and I’m needing my man!” (Afrika, 2002: 177). Danny is depicted as having a negative reaction to this supposed sweet sentiment and rants to Thomas that every time he reads the letter from his wife “at home”, he feels “dead meat” between his legs and wants to “go anywhere but home” (178). I maintain that, although the characters are portrayed as longing for “home” and a place to belong, Danny’s reaction is included to signify the true stress that soldiers returning home would feel (Roper, 2009: 7). Danny goes on to ask Thomas whether Thomas thinks his wife – and indeed everyone else “back home” – will “understand what it was *like* here, that we have been only half-way men most of the time?” (Afrika, 2002: 178). One could see this character’s lament as a subtle indication that he is realising the true relationship dynamics between himself and Thomas and knows that this relationship will not be understood “back home”.

An important aspect of Afrika’s novel is the portrayal of female characters. The first female character to whom the reader is introduced is that of Carina, Thomas’s second wife. Thomas describes her as being “unsettlingly male” (Afrika, 2002: 2). This first representation of a female character is negative, in that Carina is seen as being not truly feminine, nor does Thomas see her as being particularly attractive, describing her as having “long, rather heavy bones” (2). The entire scene involving Carina sets the tone for how the character of Thomas sees women, and one could consider this as the manner in which the author himself views women. Thomas goes further, questioning whether or not he truly loves his wife; as mentioned before, “love” is not a word which Thomas enjoys using, in fact the word “frightens” him (2). I maintain that this emotion attached to the word, and concept of “love”,

when involving women, can be seen as Afrika's own internal turmoil toward his own confused sexuality<sup>2</sup>. Thomas is described as not knowing why he "bothered to even mention a wife, and a second one at that" (3). One can see from this comment that the protagonist does not regard his wife very highly.

Another female character the reader is introduced to is the wife of Danny. Danny shows Thomas a letter from her, which Thomas finds full of "crudely sloppy sentiment" and believes her to be "concerned only with herself" (177); the letter "awakens" in Thomas a "dark resentment" (177) to which he does not put a name. One can see here that women, particularly the character of "the wife", are regarded as selfish and crudely sentimental, as I have previously quoted (177). Danny's view is more concerned with the physical relationship between him and his wife. He questions Thomas as to whether Thomas has been able to masturbate whilst in the POW camp, after both have read a letter from Danny's wife stating that she is "only human" and is "needing her man" (178). Neither character has been able to masturbate since arriving at the camp and this causes Danny to worry about the reception he will receive from his wife when he arrives home, and is unable to perform sexually. Here, the female character is portrayed as being an almost aggressive sexual being, caring only about her own carnal needs. The sexually aware female character is seen as negative by both Thomas and Danny. Later, another letter arrives from Danny's mother. It bears news which creates a turning point in the relationship between the two characters as Danny's mother tells him that his wife has absconded with another man, and is carrying his child. Stobie suggests that this letter could be considered a microcosmic representation of the betrayal the characters experience at the hands of their "mother country". The "mother country" has betrayed the male characters by sending them to war and "deserting them" and microcosmically, the wife of the character of Danny has deserted and betrayed him (2005: 207). Once again, the reader sees that Thomas's attitude toward women is negative and somewhat hostile; Danny calls his wife Bessie a "bitch and a whore" (Afrika, 2002: 189), which delights Thomas, further illustrating the scorn with which the character views women. Danny, however, is not

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<sup>2</sup> Chris Dunton makes mention in his article that some of Afrika's characters are "generally, on account of the available signifiers, identified as Afrika himself" (152), which I believe can be applied to *Bitter Eden* as it is somewhat biographical – Afrika himself was a POW in WWII as is his protagonist. Stobie also raises the fact that Afrika's "descriptions of passionate involvement with women are non-existent" (2005: 194), thus maintaining my argument that the inner turmoil of the character Thomas, and the lack of "passionate involvement" of the character with female characters can be seen to represent the inner turmoil of the author and his feelings towards women. Stobie states in her article, "Mother, Missus Mate: Bisexuality in Tatamkhulu Afrika's *Mr Chameleon* and *Bitter Eden*" that Tatamkhulu Afrika is Thomas's "alter ego"(209), thus supporting my argument.

completely exempt from viewing women in a negative light. He passes a comment to Thomas about being married, stating that ““A man only gets to be his whole self when the old dick finds the right hole”” (63); here, the reader can see that Danny considers women to simply be sexual vessels, or “holes” which men must fill – this also brings to light his view on marriage, and one questions whether the character of Danny does indeed consider marriage seriously or sees it only as something which must be done to conform to society’s ideals of what men must do, that is “finding the right hole”. Danny is angered by his wife’s betrayal, but when one considers this remark in conjunction with his reaction, I believe that his “anger” is simply shame and embarrassment about the fact that his wife has found someone else to fulfil her needs and desires.

Afrika continually portrays female characters in a negative manner, and I argue that this could be seen as the personal view of the author, as the only other references to women in *Bitter Eden* are that of a prostitute, Danny’s mother and fleeting references to Thomas’s own mother. One could consider the description of the prostitute very telling, as Thomas describes her as a “whore” who could have been his “own mother” (216). In one sentence, Thomas has offended both the prostitute and his own mother, seemingly without any qualms toward insulting the latter. The “whore” is described as giving him advice when he is unable to perform sexually with her, telling him to get his “boyfriend” out of his system, after discovering he was in a POW camp. Again, the female character is portrayed as being negative toward Thomas by insinuating that he is homosexual – the very thing which he fears. Afrika’s depiction of Danny’s mother brings to mind a strict, unyielding woman, as he describes her as having an air of “bossiness” and “sharpness”, and as having “snapping black eyes” (221). This is not the kindly mother figure whom Thomas was expecting. Stobie calls Danny’s mother a “devouring mother stereotype who [...] explicitly voices the expectations of society that the two will not sleep together, and that Danny must re-establish his social credentials [...] by finding a woman as quickly as possible” (2005: 208). This mother character could be seen as symbolising the reaction of the society at the time towards men who may have a “queer identity” (208).

The portrayal of Thomas’s mother is important. Thomas does not make much mention of her, except when having a flashback after watching a play with Danny, in which a male character portraying a female in a play is “raped” in a scene of the play; Thomas comments that neither of them should have been too shocked because both characters “had it done” to them as boys,

and remembers how his mother, once she saw his father raping him, eventually tried to understand her husband's paedophilic urges (Afrika, 2002: 197). One can see again that the figure of the mother here is a negative presence as it would appear that she did not try to stop the abuse but rather tried to comfort Thomas's father by learning what his problem was; while in the field of psychology this action is something which is seen as "progressive", in the eyes of the child whom the father is hurting, it could be construed as the mother aligning herself with the abuser rather than with the victim. I argue that this action on the part of Thomas's mother may have been the catalyst for Thomas's dislike of and disdain for women. This derision towards women strengthens within Thomas his feelings toward Danny, which eventually lead to the afore-mentioned physical realisation of their attraction to and "love" for one another. The deeper meaning of the feelings of dislike that Thomas has towards women could be seen as his feelings toward society itself, a society which does not understand the "mateship" and bond formed between the two characters. Society urges "integration" with the norms, which makes it difficult for both Thomas and Danny to adopt a "queer identity" (Stobie, 2005: 208).

*Bitter Eden* brings to light the idea that masculinity is not singular and is a concept which is advancing and changing. Men do not have to abide by one concept of hegemonic masculinity but can rather choose to orientate themselves with a masculinity more suitable to them, such as homosocial masculinity or a queer identity. Choosing an alternate masculinity comes at a price, as one can see by the inner stress and pained emotions experienced by the protagonist. Afrika's text, while the majority is set during World War II, was written in a more modern period and thus can be seen to highlight the fact that, despite what society says, one is able to "live [...] beyond binary structures of sex, gender and sexuality" (Stobie, 2005: 209). The characters in Afrika's novel certainly show this, and the novel illustrates that male characters do not have to follow the rules seen in war novels such as *Band of Brothers* (Ambrose, 1992), whose characters are hegemonic and patriarchal, but can be presented as men who show alternative emotions to their contacts, and can choose a masculinity which is different from the social norm of hegemonic masculinity.

## Chapter Two

### *King Rat*

#### Meat's Back on the Menu: Military Masculinity and Hegemonic Practices in a Prisoner of War Camp

This chapter will discuss the semi-autobiographical novel *King Rat* by James Clavell. The novel is set in the Prisoner of War camp in Changi during 1945, and is the story of the routine and relationships cultivated between the male characters. The novel can be read as a medieval “morality play”, in which the character of the “Everyman” must choose between two moral positions (MacDonald, 1996: 34). *King Rat* also builds on the theme of a “world turned upside down”: insanity has become normality and normality is unknown (47). This theme can also be seen in the novel *One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest* (Ken Kesey, 1975), in that both the POWs and the inmates of the asylum have come to adapt to the insanity of their microcosm and to lose sense of what is considered “normality” (48). *King Rat* focuses on two main protagonists – Peter Marlowe and the King – and their relationship, everyday life in the POW camp and how Peter Marlowe's values and viewpoint toward military masculinity change over the course of time.

The themes which will be discussed in this chapter are father-and-son relationships, class hatred, cultural differences and human sexuality. The theme of class hatred is relevant to this dissertation as class hatred and class conflicts are a part of hegemonic masculinity, in that the “ruling” class will dominate the “lower” class, as the stronger males will dominate the weaker; the stronger males often being from the “ruling” class. Cultural differences relate to the military masculinity theme of this chapter, as the male characters in *King Rat* are portrayed as showing disdain toward soldiers who are of a different culture from themselves; the Western soldiers clearly hate the Asian soldiers and vice versa. One can see here, again, that hegemonic masculinity practices take place in the military, as the soldiers view men of a different culture as “lesser” than themselves.

I chose to discuss this novel as it covers topics which I feel were not widely discussed during the time of its setting. Soldiers in some WWII literature, such as *Band of Brothers* by Stephen Ambrose (1992) and *Bridge Over The River Kwai* by Pierre Boulle (1954), are portrayed as dominant, aggressive and honour-driven men who do not let their weakness show; *King Rat*

subverts these characteristics of “typical” soldiers to show a more sensitive male character, one who bonds with a fellow prisoner and who allows the males around him to witness his human side. The novel has not been covered in the academic field as broadly as the other two novels in the dissertation, and it is because of this that I have used one book in particular as my major secondary material on *King Rat*, that is *James Clavell: A Critical Companion* by Gina MacDonald. In this book, MacDonald dissects all of Clavell’s novels but her chapter on *King Rat* was particularly helpful; the bulk of the secondary material on *King Rat* were book and film reviews, as the novel is considered “pop culture” and is therefore not widely covered by academics (MacDonald, 1996: 34).

The theme of father-and-son relationships relates to both the main protagonist of the novel, Peter Marlowe, and the secondary protagonist, Corporal King (who is simply called “the King”). The relationship between a father and son could be seen as somewhat hegemonic, as the father is seen to be given control over his son, who is younger and less experienced than himself. A father is often the example upon which a son models his own ideals of masculinity and I argue that this can be seen in the context of *King Rat*. Marlowe’s father and grandfather were in the military, as stated earlier in the introductory chapter. His father has instilled in Marlowe the ideals of integrity, honour, duty, service and of “keeping a stiff upper lip” (48). According to Gina MacDonald, James Clavell himself had both his grandfather and father in the Navy (1) and they would regale the young Clavell with stories of their experiences of war and with their militaristic ideals of morality, duty and honour. One can see that this fact shows that the character Marlowe represents Clavell and the strength of a father’s influence on his son. Marlowe is taught to downplay acts of courage and heroism and to perform his duty without complaint (41); because of these ideas and rules, Marlowe believes that a “proper Englishman” should be “proud to be killed for the flag” (Clavell, , 1975: 134).

According to Robert Nye, armies are raised by “maintaining military ideals at a simmer” and by keeping the representation of military values “fresh by commemoration, by national myths and by masculine civilian practices, that are readily adaptable to a soldierly end” (2007: 418). One can see that Marlowe’s father is doing just that by telling his son stories of his own military prowess and by teaching him the British ideals of integrity, honour and duty. Marlowe has taken on these ideals and, one could say, believes that “becoming a man” means joining the military and fighting in a war; this I believe is maintained by Marlowe’s aforementioned statement that an Englishman should be “proud to be killed for the flag”

(Clavell, , 1975: 134). Here it is obvious that Marlowe has taken his father's teachings in his civilian life and applied them to his military life, adopting a "military masculinity" (Nye, 2007: 418), by being willing to die for his country. His father could be seen as the catalyst for this attitude, as he was the one who taught Marlowe these values. The terrible conditions of the camp, however, cause Marlowe to question his father's moral values and subsequently the British military's moral code, as his need to survive is at odds with these somewhat irrelevant ethics.

Marlowe meets and befriends the intriguing King. The King becomes a "counter-father figure" to Marlowe once he begins to question the code of his own father (MacDonald, 1996: 42). The King is a man who follows a code of survival and of looking after "number one" (42). He heads up the black market trading of Changi and profits from it. He teaches Marlowe an American "working class" code which is at odds with the condescending view Marlowe's father held towards businessmen and traders; the character himself states at one stage, "Marlowes aren't tradesmen [...] It's just not done, old boy" (Clavell, 1975: 57). This at first annoys the King, as his father's absenteeism and utter unreliability as a travelling salesman have caused him to live by mottos such as "with money all things are possible" and "you have to look after number one [since] no one else does" (78, 153). This shows that the beliefs and morals of one's father are powerful motivators for men and often shape their view of the world, as Marlowe and the King demonstrate. Men are taught to adhere to a hegemonic moral code, no matter what situation they are in, but Clavell brings this into question by posing to Marlowe – and the reader – a choice between honour and survival. This choice is represented by Marlowe's fellow inmates Lieutenant Grey and Corporal King. Lt Grey represents for Marlowe his father's moral code of military tradition, rank and honour (MacDonald, 1996: 43), and the King represents disobeying this tradition in favour of survival. Marlowe does not fully give up his father's beliefs, as he still instinctually sacrifices the "personal for group needs", but he does come to understand the King's reasoning and realises that breaking away from military tradition is successful and is done for the good of the camp.

Two themes which have ties to father-and-son relationships are the obvious ones seen in the novel: class hatred and class conflicts. I chose to discuss these themes as class hatred and class conflict can be seen as both hegemonic, in terms of Antonio Gramsci's original definition of cultural hegemony which is: "the domination of a diverse society by the 'ruling class'" (Gramsci, 1970: 400), and as hegemonically masculine, in terms of Raewyn Connell's

altered definition of hegemony, which is: “the practice that allowed men’s dominance over women and the weak, to continue” (Donaldson, 1993: 643). Related to this issue of class is the matter of military rank, which is still used in the camp, despite the absurdity of the ranks in a place where the structure of the “outside world” has become obsolete. A short scene in which the novel shows an example of this class hatred, which is primarily displayed by the character Lt Grey, takes place in the food line where Grey asks a fellow inmate when the food will be arriving:

“Why isn’t it here already?” [Grey] asked the man ahead of him. “How the hell do I know?” Dave Daven said curtly. His accent was public school – Eton, Harrow or Charterhouse – he was tall like bamboo. “I was just asking” Grey said irritably, despising Daven for his accent and his birthright. (Clavell, 1975: 21)

One can see clearly here that Grey applies his class hatred to most aspects of his life, as even a simple interaction with a fellow inmate irritates him to the point of “despising” the other man simply because of where he attended school and his manner of speaking. Grey resents this minor character, Daven, for being of a “higher class” than himself despite the fact that inside the walls of Changi, everyone is the same “class” – a prisoner. There is, however, the argument that the “King” is regarded as being at the “top” of the camp hierarchy (MacDonald, 1996: 42), despite the fact that he comes from a working class background. His father’s manner of employment may have affected the King, in that, by choosing to trade with the other soldiers and by offering them services, he has gained power within the POW camp; power which he may not necessarily have attained in the military or in civilian life. Grey despises the King because of this and makes no secret of his hatred, vowing to send the King to Outram Road jail, a place even worse than the Changi POW camp (Clavell, 1975: 2). While the King, as an American, sees the British class divisions as “petty”, he does reside in the “American” hut of the camp (23). The hut is thus named because the USAF (United States Air Force) captain, Captain Bough, had “insisted that the American enlisted men have their own hut” (23). The American officers and higher ranked men would have “preferred to move in too – it was difficult for them to live among foreigners – but this was not allowed, for the Japanese had ordered that officers be separated from enlisted men” (23). This fact shows that, while the American characters do not believe in division by *class*, they do find that living with other cultures is difficult for them, creating a cultural divide – a topic which will be discussed later. Marlowe and the King’s relationship then could be seen as contradictory to the American and British cultural divide, as they disregard class and even

military rank by forming a strong, homosocial relationship. Marlowe is labelled as a “traitor” to the British and to his “class” by Grey for socialising with the King (133). Grey resents Marlowe for his “birth and his accent”, two features which he “wanted beyond all things and could never have” (31); the fact that Marlowe has chosen to socialise with an American man whom Grey considers “low-class” fuels Grey’s hatred for Marlowe. The friendship between Marlowe and the King begins simply as a business arrangement, after an incident involving a Ronson lighter, and ends as a strong bond between the two men. The lighter incident causes the two characters to have a minor altercation at the door of the American hut, and one of the fellow American inmates happens to bear witness to it; the King tells this third character to leave. The character does so, and makes an observation which reiterates the issue of rank and how influential it is on the men in the camp, “Max went out agreeably. He thought the King was very wise to have no witnesses, not when you clobber an officer” (36). The fact that Marlowe is a Royal Air Force (RAF) officer is revealed earlier in the scene, when Grey forces him to don his armband which reveals his rank and title to the American soldiers. Marlowe’s rank is at first unnerving to the King and his fellow hut occupants, as this rank would mean that Marlowe deserves a large amount of respect in their treatment of him – and an amount of fear, as one can see in the observation that there should be “no witnesses” when one has an argument or altercation with an officer (36).

There is a theme in the novel which relates to class and rank division, that of the “absurdity of war”, or more generally, absurdity itself. The purpose of Clavell employing this topic is to show the reader that the “Army does things in its own peculiar way” (MacDonald, 1996: 47), which relates to the fact that rank was still instilled in the POW camp, despite the idea of rank in such an unstructured place being little more than a facade to the characters. According to Dorian Marsalek, the military offered its men two choices: acceptance of or rejection of the military rules and regulations. Marsalek postulates that either choice may have meant “trouble” for the soldiers because of the rules and “exceptions to other exceptions, which consequently started to puzzle everyone but the high-ranked officers who were in charge of [creating] the hard-to-understand regulations” (2006: 48). These numerous regulations could be seen to have created within the soldiers the need to not simply survive the war, but the *absurdity* of the war as well (48). The absurdity is also seen in another aspect, when the King is all but abandoned by the British men whom he once helped, and by his own men, once the rescue effort commences. Their treatment of him at this stage is absurd because they return almost immediately to old military values and rank – both the British and his own men – once

they realise that they will be leaving the microcosm of Changi camp for the “real world” (49). The rescue of the POWs means that the King is reduced to a man with no power once more, and that he will have to return to the old policies and codes; the King will also have to return to his former life of poverty, and to the lowly rank of “Corporal”, when once his rank held no bearing on his influence. The King is devastated once he is stripped of his authority in the camp, as Clavell describes: “Forsyth and the others had taken away his face. He knew that he was lost. And faceless, he was terrified [...] Jesus, God, he wept inside, give me back my face. Please give me back my face” (306-7). In this context, he considers himself “faceless” because Forsyth, their rescuer, saw him only as a suspicious American corporal and not as the King as the other POWs saw him. Marlowe is possibly the only character who sees that this meek King, who replies “Yes Sergeant” to the American rescuers, is not the “real” King; Marlowe realises that the King who is so despondent at the end of the novel is “another man, torn from the womb of Changi, the man that Changi nurtured for so long” (309). The camp also reflects the absurdity of war, as it has broken the spirits of many men who were once only too happy to die and fight for their country. Grey, too, views the King’s departure with emotion, but his is malice and *Schadenfreude*. Grey remarks to a man standing beside him – who he does not realise is Marlowe – that the Americans have a “special plane to fly them all the way back to America [...] Just a handful of men and some junior officers” (308). Marlowe is angered by this remark and the fact that even after having been rescued, Grey remains stubbornly fixated on the topic of rank and class. Marlowe snaps back to Grey that the Americans think that “one man’s as good as another. So they get a plane, all to themselves”. Grey retorts with, “Don’t tell me the upper-classes have at last realised –”; this is cut off but the gist of the reply is a sarcastic remark upon the treatment of the “upper class” towards the “lower class” (308-9).

Relating to the issue of class and rank is the breeding, selling and consumption of the rats themselves in the novel. The greediest and most selfish people of the camp (mainly the officers and higher ranking characters, and some Japanese guards) pay the King and his men a lot of money for the rat meat – of course, they are not told it is rat meat. Clavell considers men such as this to be “human rats” as they will stop at nothing to better themselves, even if it may hurt others in the process (MacDonald, 1996: 49). The King’s men find a large male rat in their hut and the King decides, rather than kill the animal, he wants to keep it alive. He shares this idea with the rest of the men gathered in the hut,

“All right you guys. Now listen. We’ve got a rat, right?” “So?” Miller was perplexed as they all were. “We’ve no food, right?” “Sure but...?” “Oh my God” Peter Marlowe said, aghast. “You don’t mean you’re suggesting we eat it?” “Of course not”, the King said. Then he beamed seraphically. “We’re not going to. But there’d be plenty who’d like to buy some meat”. (Clavell, 1975: 91)

I argue that the breeding of the rats and the selling of the rat meat relates to class hatred, as the King reiterates to his men that “with the dough we make we’ll buy chicken – and the peasants can eat the *tikus*” (91). He uses the word *tikus* because the men came up with the idea to lie to their customers, telling them that the meat is actually from a *Rusa tikus*, a small deer native to the area. Later in the novel, the King has a revelation about whom to sell the meat to. He at first asks an Australian man to market the meat to his fellow hut-mates but the Australian says, “It don’t sit right at all”, to which Marlowe adds, “Nor to our chaps either” (195). Here one can see that there is a culture divide, as while Marlowe and the rest of the King’s men have no qualms about selling rat meat to other inmates in the camp, the idea of selling to *their own men* disgusts them. To remedy this problem, the King announces his brilliant idea: “We’re only going to sell to officers! Brass! Majors and up!” (195). The other male characters react positively to this idea, some saying, “Why, I know three bastards I’d give my right arm to see eat rat meat and then tell ‘em” (196). From this comment, one can see that officers and army ranks in general irk the men being held in Changi, as the officers are the “only bastards who can afford to buy” as they have a high rank – something which is absurd in a place such as a POW camp. The enlisted men view the officers with such anger and dislike because, according to MacDonald, quoting from Gavan Daws the British officers did the Japanese guards’ “dirty work” and went “strutting around with swagger sticks, demanding military courtesy and formal salutes [...] The British officers treated their own enlisted men like dirt and, in their loftiness, assumed they could treat Americans the same” (49).

A topic which relates closely to that of class hatred is the theme of cultural differences seen in the novel. This can be seen in the manner in which the Japanese guards regard their captors – they view the POWs as “subhuman” because, by the Japanese codes of military behaviour, the POW characters have failed to act with honour as they surrendered instead of fighting or committing *seppuku* (ritual suicide) once captured (49). Marlowe tells this to the King, while retelling the story of his capture. He says that the Japanese “cut off our hair and forbade us to wear officer’s insignia”. Eventually they “allowed us” to “become officers again” (71).

According to a study done on American POWs in Japan, many of the men noted the contempt shown by their Japanese captors toward the obvious surrender of the POWs. The study theorises that this could be attributed to the Japanese military ethic based on a “Bushido tradition”, in which all soldiers were demanded to display “extreme devotion” and were disgraced and shamed if they surrendered (MacDonald, 1996: 8). Clavell portrays the Japanese as “barbaric, ruthless and sadistic” (43). The Japanese soldiers who had withheld vital Red Cross supplies from the POWs would later pay homage to these same men who had died “honourably” at their hands. The Asian “indifference to life, tolerance of cruelty and the isolation and distrust of the outsider” and the Japanese “group loyalty” are major themes seen in *King Rat* (44). A scene which illustrates the indifference to life and the Japanese guards’ extreme focus on “obedience” is one which may disturb the reader. Marlowe describes to the King the mental instability of the guards, saying, “I’m afraid of them, because you’ve no yardstick to judge them. They don’t react the way they should. Never” (Clavell, 1975: 70). Marlowe then goes on to describe an incident at a previous camp where he was held. A character named Sunny – a “Jap guard” – loved dogs and was continuously followed by a small pack of them. One day, a female gave birth to a litter of pups and Sunny was delighted. A puppy, once it could walk, refused to obey and follow Sunny, upsetting the guard and causing him to give the puppy’s leash a:

“real jerk [...] Sunny took a firm grip on the string, and started swinging the pup around his head on the rope. He whirled it maybe a dozen times, laughing as though this was the greatest joke in the world [...] he let go of the string. The pup must have gone fifty feet into the air. And when it fell on the iron-hard ground, it burst like a tomato.” (70)

Marlowe further recounts how Sunny reacted, saying that the Japanese guard “burst into tears” and asked a POW to bury the destroyed animal, “[tearing] at himself with grief”. After the pup was buried, Sunny gave the POW a pack of cigarettes then “shoved the butt of his rifle into the man’s groin”; Sunny then left with the remaining dogs (70). This incident supports Clavell’s portrayal of the Japanese as “barbaric”, as the character of Sunny chooses a terrible way to discipline his pet. Marlowe summarises their mindset in this manner: “Japs seem to act like children – but they’ve men’s bodies and men’s strength. They just look at things as a child does. Their perspective is oblique – to us – and distorted” (71).

This description of the Japanese soldiers is racist and negative. It “others” the Japanese soldiers and illustrates the Western viewpoint of their enemies. The racism toward Japanese

people began after their attack on Pearl Harbour; it was more prevalent in the United States but anti-Japanese sentiment was also found in Britain and in Australia as a result of Pearl Harbour and the treatment of the POWs in the POW camps in Japan, although the British appeared to be much more tolerant of the Japanese. One can see from reading the novel that Clavell was sympathetic towards Americans and I argue that this racist statement made by his protagonist is meant to show this aspect of the author himself, and I include the quotation in order to show the attitude of the Western soldiers during the era in which *King Rat* is set. The comments made by Marlowe are included to illustrate the racism of the setting of the novel, as one can see by this quote from a letter Clavell wrote to the Japanese Emperor, after the Emperor visited Britain in 1970 and was greeted with hostility: “I would like to welcome you to my country; one time I would not have, but now I do” (McDowell, 1981: 17). One can see from this statement that Clavell’s racism in *King Rat* is not representative of the author’s viewpoint at the time of writing the novel, but rather a representation of the viewpoint of the male characters during the era in which the novel was set, and of a younger Clavell.

A contrast to the brutal and militaristic representation of the Japanese is that of the slower-speaking, relaxed Javanese people. Marlowe spends time in a Javanese village after leaving his squadron in Bandung. He meets with the headman of the village and, much to the headman’s surprise, Marlowe has read the Koran. After asking Marlowe if he is “one of the Faithful” (a follower of Mohammed) the headman, pleased with Marlowe’s very philosophical answer allows the starving and scared soldier to stay in the village. The conditions are that Marlowe: “will swear to obey our laws and be one of us [...] will work in the paddy and work in the village, the work of a man. No more and no less than any man [...] will learn our language and will speak only our language” (133). As one can see from this, the difference between the Japanese and the Javanese is profound; the Javanese headman and villagers treat Marlowe with kindness whereas the Japanese treat Marlowe (and the other POWs) with contempt and disgust.

When the King and Marlowe leave the camp one night to do business with the Javanese headman of a nearby village, it is Marlowe who speaks to him in Malay, as the King’s business manner is much too abrupt for the slower, more polite patterns of Asian custom. A comment that Marlowe makes shows that he understands the customs. The King is in a rush to do business, but Marlowe cautions him, saying, ““You can’t talk business yet, old man [...] You’ll hurt everything. First we’ll have to have some coffee and something to eat, then we’ll

start.’ ‘Tell them now.’ ‘If I do, they’ll be very offended. Very. You can take my word for it’” (144). The Javanese custom of pleasantries before business is in stark contrast to the direct, almost aggressive business approach that the American King has toward their dealings. The King also makes a comment about the daughter of the headman, Sutra, saying to Marlowe that they should ask her to “join them for coffee sometime”. Marlowe is embarrassed and shocked at this remark, chiding the King in reaction to the offering, ““For the love of God. You don’t come out and make a date just like that. You’ve got to take time to build up to it’”, to which the King replies, ““Hell, that’s not the American way. You meet a broad, you like her and she likes you, you hit the sack’”. Marlowe exasperatedly exclaims that the King has “no finesse” (147). This exchange may provide some comic relief but it is an observation of three different cultures within the novel. Marlowe’s knowledge and respect of the Javanese culture could be seen as Clavell’s portrayal of his idea of the perfect “East meets West attitude” (MacDonald, 1996: 44).

Regarding cultural differences between the POWs and their Asian captors and counterparts, one must also examine the contrasting *Western* cultures within the walls of Changi. The three distinct groups are the British (including Mac, a Scottish character), the Australians, and the Americans. These groups could be considered “superficially alike yet totally different” (44). Their language may be the same but each cultural group has different “subtleties, nuances and linguistic cues” (44). As one can see from Marlowe’s character traits and manner of speaking, the British are cryptic and underplay compliments and insults. The very first interaction between the King and Marlowe illustrates this. The King, in an attempt to impress Marlowe, fries an egg for the starving man. The King believes the egg to be “magnificent” but Marlowe simply says ““Not bad’” to the offering (Clavell, 1975: 33). The King is enraged by this comment and believes Marlowe to be insulting him, but Marlowe quickly explains that he has just paid the King the “greatest compliment in the English world” and that he is praising the King without embarrassing him (33). The differences in speaking and etiquette are, I argue, the characteristics which lead Grey to see the King as inferior or “low class”, as the King is much more brash and forward when compared to the reserved British manner. Within the microcosm of the camp, Grey is forced to survive alongside a culture which he finds to be of a lower calibre than his own.

The cultural differences in the novel also relate to the portrayal of human sexuality, in particular to the views on women, sexual intercourse and homosexuality. The depiction of

Asian and Western women in the novel is very different. The view of Western women can be seen in the portrayal of Grey's wife, Trina. The very first thoughts Grey has about her are negative: "We'll cook all day, Trina and I, and when we're not cooking and eating we'll be making love. Love? No, just making pain. Trina, that bitch, with her 'I'm too tired', or 'I've got a headache', or 'For the love of God, what again?' or 'All right, I suppose I'll have to'" (104). Her lack of enthusiasm toward sexual intercourse and coldness towards Grey are negative characteristics, and are not seen in Clavell's portrayal of Asian women, which will be discussed later. Trina is shown as a manipulative and withholding woman, as one can see in her and Grey's interaction on their wedding night, a memory which should be positive for Grey but is in actual fact tinged with bitterness: "That night Grey discovered that Trina wasn't a virgin. Oh, she acted as though she was, and complained for many days that, please darling, I'm so sore, be patient. But she wasn't a virgin and that hurt Grey, for she had implied it many times" (105). The fact that Trina lied to him about her virginity is wounding to Grey as it means that Trina is not new to physical intimacy and thus only withholds it from him in order to manipulate or hurt him, and not because she is truly feeling any physical aversion to the act. On the night Grey is to leave for war, there is an altercation between him and Trina. He is nervous before leaving and wishes to be physically intimate with her before leaving but she refuses him, saying,

"For the love of God, Robin, don't! You'll mess up my makeup!" "To hell with your makeup!" he said. "I won't be here tomorrow." "Perhaps that's just as well. I don't think you're very kind or very thoughtful." "What do you expect me to be like? Is it wrong for a husband to want his wife?" "Stop shouting. My God, the neighbours will hear you!" (105)

After this exchange, Grey tears at his wife's clothes in desperation as his sexual frustration peaks. He comes close to forcing himself upon her but stops himself. When thinking back to this incident, Grey is ashamed and disgusted, but ever the British gentleman, does not blame her despite his anger and frustration. He claims, at least to himself, that it is his own fault and his own "manly needs" which caused him to be "oversexed" and lustful toward Trina (107). I argue that Clavell has presented Trina in this manner, in order to illustrate to his reader that sexual intercourse and attraction is a "two sided-coin" and that men do not simply crave sex but also physical and emotional intimacy. Grey's wife represents the view that sexual intercourse is an act which should be repressed and not spoken or acted upon unless between husband and wife; even then, it should be "kept to a minimum" (MacDonald, 1996: 40).

One must compare the portrayal of Asian women to the portrayal of Western women in *King Rat*, and in conjunction the portrayal of the attitude toward sex in Asian culture. Clavell depicts the Asian attitude toward sex as “matter-of-fact” (40). Marlowe has a sexual experience with a young girl, N’ai, in the Javanese village in which he takes refuge. N’ai is only a fourteen-year-old girl but, according to Clavell’s representation of Javanese cultural beliefs, a *healthy* sexual relationship is “good for young people and would make the young girl happier with marriage later” (40). Immediately, one can see a difference in the attitude towards sexual intercourse and physical intimacy; the Western view is that young people should remain virgins until marriage whereas the Javanese view is that a healthy sexual relationship between a young couple will prepare the girl for a happy marriage. Clavell appears to see this as a healthy attitude, and therefore writes about Marlowe’s experience in a positive manner (41). Marlowe’s time with N’ai was “liberating” and memorable, as he thinks back to her often. Another example of the Javanese attitude toward sexuality is when the King and Marlowe are served a meal by Sulina, the daughter of the afore-mentioned Sutra. The headman sees the two “tuan-tuan” – a Malay term of respect for men – as potential lovers for his daughter. He believes that if the King or Marlowe took her for a “mistress for a year or two [...] she would come back to the village well versed in the ways of men, with a nice dowry in her hands, and it would be easy for him to find the right husband for her” (Clavell, 1975: 146). An important detail to notice is that the headman does not consider the Western soldiers as *husbands* for his daughter, but simply as sexual teachers; this once again shows a cultural divide between Asian and Western cultures. Sulina, however, should not be considered as simply an object for her father to do with as he pleases; she is shown as having a mutual attraction to Marlowe, as can be seen when Marlowe is swimming in the sea nude and notices Sulina watching him:

He knew that she was looking at him and he wondered, shamed, if she had seen. He watched and she watched him. Then he saw her take away the sarong and lay it down and pick up a clean white towel to dry the sweat that sheened her body [...] And all the time she watched him, smiling [...] Sulina watched. And waited. Impatient as he. (159)

This silent acknowledgement from Sulina that she too, finds Marlowe attractive, is significant as it illustrates to the reader that the young girls were aware of their own sexuality and desires and were not simply “given” to men by their fathers, ignorant about sexuality. A further example of Clavell’s representation of Asian women can be seen in Kasseh, the King’s consort. She was a gift from the headman to the King and she, too, has her own thoughts

regarding physical intimacy: “‘But [the King] is so big and I am so small. He towers over me by two heads’. Even so, she knew that she pleased him. It is easy to please a man. If you are a woman. And not ashamed of being a woman [...] ‘yet when we lie down, there is not so much difference, no?’” (154). The Asian female characters all appear to have a positive viewpoint regarding sex and sexuality, as one can see here from Kasseh’s musings about her relationship with the King. While she may have been part of a business agreement between Sutra and the King, she does not appear to hold a grudge about this fact and does seem to appear to enjoy her encounters with the POW (MacDonald, 1996: 41). The line “‘yet when we lie down, there is not so much difference, no?’” could be seen as the Javanese view that men and women are equal, in terms of sexuality. I deduce from Clavell’s depiction of the female Asian characters that he is aiming to subvert the hegemonic masculine ideal of women as “lesser beings” by writing about them in an equally positive light to the male characters.

I turn now to the portrayal of same-sex desire in the novel. According to MacDonald, same-sex desire (or homosexuality) bothered Clavell and so this is echoed in the character of Marlowe (40). There are two characters in *King Rat* who display same-sex attraction characteristics: Sean and Steven. Sean’s same-sex attraction and transformation stuns and repulses Marlowe the most, however, as Sean was once his close friend and fellow pilot. I use the word “transformation” in the case of Sean, because Clavell portrays him as *becoming* female. Sean was not attracted to other men before he was taken to Changi but eventually became a transvestite and an extremely effeminate man after being coerced into acting the female parts on stage in the camp’s theatre. Marlowe speaks to a senior officer about Sean, and the officer, Major Rodrick, tells Marlowe how Sean “became” the effeminate man he now is:

“When we got the job of casting, of course, someone had to play the female roles. No one would volunteer, so the authorities detailed two or three. One of them was Sean. He was bitterly opposed to doing it, but you know how stubborn senior officers are [...] Sean asked me not to accept him. Well, there’s no future in working with unco-operative talent, so I tried to have him dropped from the company. “Look”, I said to the authorities, “acting’s a great psychological strain [...] The fact that he’s playing a female might warp him. If he were the slightest way inclined”. (233)

As one can see here, Sean was reluctant to play the female roles, as he could be seen as still following the hegemonic mindset of viewing acting as “feminine” and as going against

“masculine norms” (MacDonald, 1996: 42). The Major continues Sean’s tale of transformation:

“But little by little, the woman began to dominate him off stage too, only we didn’t notice it. By this time, Sean had grown his hair quite long – the wigs we had were no damn good. Then Sean started to wear a woman’s clothes all the time. One night someone tried to rape him. After that Sean nearly went out of his mind. He tried to crush the woman in him but couldn’t. Then he tried to commit suicide. Of course it was hushed up. But that didn’t help Sean, it made things worse and he cursed us for saving him. A few months later there was another rape attempt. After that Sean buried his male self completely. ‘I’m not fighting it anymore,’ he said. ‘You wanted me to be a woman, now they believe I am one. All right. I’ll be one. Inside I feel I am one, so there’s no need to pretend any more. I am a woman, and I’m going to be treated like one.’” (Clavell, , 1975: 234)

According to a paper concerning same-sex desire during World War Two, an Australian General acknowledged that “same-sex activity occurred in many instances [but] only because of enforced segregation from female society” (Willett, 2013: 27). This statement can be applied to the character of Sean, and I apply to him, in conjunction with this statement, the explanation Marlowe offers for his transformation into a “woman”: Marlowe uses the Asian theory “yin and yang”. He theorises that the absence of women in the POW camp creates a natural imbalance (yang without yin), therefore an “instinctual drive” for balance means that some males will assume the “yin”, the soft female role. According to Willett, this was considered to be “situational homosexuality” and was reluctantly admitted to by many Army personnel; many men, who in their civilian life would have abhorred any intimacy with a fellow man, were “very, very happy” to participate as “there were no women around [and] they were missing it” (31). Despite this, however, Willett and Smaal state that there were many men who were “*fearful* of the effeminate man rather than simply averse to, or offended by, their presence. Part of this anxiety may be rooted in the homosocial constitution of the armed services and the potential for platonic affection to manifest physically” (36). I argue that the prospect of a complete gender orientation shift, which Sean experiences, would have instilled in some of his comrades a fear that it may happen to them; Sean did not enter the camp as a man with same-sex attraction but *transformed* into a man with same-sex tendencies due to the situation. I believe that Clavell included this character to represent his own fears at the time. The statement made by Willett and Small can be related to Marlowe’s attitude toward Sean. When we are first introduced to the character of Sean, Marlowe’s reaction is negative: “‘Hey Peter!’ The King was looking up the slope, his mouth agape. Peter Marlowe

followed the King's gaze and his stomach turned over as he saw Sean approaching. 'Christ!' He wanted to slip through the window out of sight" (Clavell, , 1975: 44). Sean makes a cutting remark to the King, once they have been introduced, saying that Marlowe "despises deviants" (the term in that era for same-sex attracted men and women) (46). This remark is made sarcastically and I believe is included to show that Sean is degrading the British hegemonic aversion to same-sexuality. The King is much more pleasant toward Sean, saying that, "'The shows are the best thing in the camp [...] Make life worth living. And you're the best thing in them'" but his physical reaction to the effeminate man shows obvious discomfit as his "knees jellied and his backbone melted" (47). He admits to Marlowe that Sean is a physically attractive man, because he is so uncannily feminine and that when Sean was playing Desdemona wearing a scanty negligee, "there wasn't a man in Changi that didn't have a hard on. Don't blame a man for being tempted. I'm tempted, everyone is. Man's a liar if he says otherwise". He then jokes with Marlowe that the exchange of words between him and Sean sounded like a "lover's spat" and this shocks and angers Marlowe (47).

Aside from Sean, there is another character in the camp who is depicted as having "same-sex tendencies" and that is Steven, the camp's "hospital" orderly. He is portrayed as having a "delicate" manner of performing things. This "delicacy", combined with Steven's sexuality, causes the doctor of the camp, Dr Kennedy, to "[despise] his oily black hair, his shaven armpits and his shaven legs" (77). The doctor does feel, however, as though he "could not blame [Steven]" as "homosexuality was one way to survive". Steven was fought over by men in the camp and is given rations by some, "all for the temporary use of his body" (77). This disgusts the doctor and causes him to be short tempered with the man during a consultation in the camp hospital: "'Yes Doctor', Steven looked up primly. 'Shall I give him quinine?' 'Of course you give him quinine [...]' and for the love of God, Steven, stop trying to pretend you're a blasted woman!'" Before the argument escalates, another character enters the room, a Dr Prudhomme. He calls Kennedy aside but Steven is still in the room; Clavell heightens Steven's feminine appearance in this scene by describing him like this: "In the half light of the shielded electric lamp Steven's long slim legs were accented. So was the curve of his buttocks straining against his tight short pants" (78). This feminine description is used to further Kennedy's distaste for the same-sex attracted Steven:

Dr Kennedy saw with dismay that Prudhomme was still looking at Steven [...] As Dr Kennedy left the ward, from the corner of his eye he saw Steven brush past

Prudhomme and he saw Prudhomme's furtive caress. He heard Steven's laugh and saw him return the caress openly and intimately. Their obscenity overwhelmed him and he knew that he should go back to the ward and order them apart and court-martial them. (79)

This scene, and the reaction of the character of Dr Kennedy, show the reader that the mindset toward same-sex relationships and same-sex intimacy, during the World War Two era, was negative and was seen as something undesirable by the military and by hegemonically masculine mindsets. It is this mindset (and the addition of battle-fatigue) which causes Sean's suicide after the rescue of Changi:

More men went swimming now [...] Sean went swimming. He walked down to the shore with the men and in his hand was a bundle. When the party got to the beach, Sean turned away and the men laughed and jeered, most of them, at the pervert who wouldn't take off his clothes, like anyone else. "Pansy!" "Bugger!" "Rotten fairy!" "Homo!" Sean walked up the beach, away from the jeers, until he found a private place. He slipped off his short pants and shirt and put on the evening sarong and padded bra and belt and stockings and combed his hair and put on makeup [...] And then the girl stood up, confident and very happy. She put on her high-heeled shoes and walked into the sea. The sea welcomed her and made her sleep easy, and then, in the course of time, devoured the clothes and body and the time of her. (313)

I feel it is important to note that Clavell says the sea "devoured the time of her", as it shows that Sean, in his transvestite and same-sex mindset, could not have returned to "normal society" outside of the microcosm of the POW camp, and thus his "time" was over and he felt that he needed to end his life, for the sake of his own sanity and for fear of what may have happened to him in the outside, "real" world. The military mindset of homosexuality being undesirable has caused Sean to detest himself internally and to feel a form of homophobia toward the "woman" he has become; the military masculinity mindset has remained with Sean, and the other POWs, despite their being kept captive in a place where this should no longer have had an impact on their lives.

My concluding argument for this chapter is that the rats in *King Rat* could be seen to represent the POWs themselves. The rats are kept in cages and are eventually forgotten by their captors; they have limited food and the weak and crippled die out. Like the human King, who waits and finds a way outside the camp to local food sources, the *rat* "king" patiently

attacks and destroys his cage to reach a new food supply – in the next cage. Clavell uses this last scene to show that he believes that adaptation and versatility are necessary for survival but that the “best man” is the one who survives without completely losing his humanity (MacDonald, 1996: 39). Throughout the novel, one can see that despite the harrowing situation, hegemonic practices, such as the maintaining and acknowledgement of military rank, are continued. This shows that military masculinity was very strong in the era’s fiction and mindset, but the character of Marlowe illustrates that male characters (and male soldiers) chose to ignore these practices in favour of a more friendly and homosocial masculinity, in aid of both psychological and physical survival.

## Chapter Three

### *The Road:*

#### Fatherhood, the Apocalypse and a “Dying King’s” Wish to Provide for and Protect his Son

The post-apocalyptic landscape is not one in which a reader would expect a father-and-son relationship to be set, but Cormac McCarthy’s novel *The Road* challenges this by focusing on the love between a father and son, rather than on the terrifying consequences they find themselves in. The post-apocalyptic narrative in *The Road* is set after an unexplained “event” which has destroyed most of the nature in the world, replacing it with a blackened, desolate earth. The novel’s focal theme, the father-and-son relationship, sets it aside from other post-apocalyptic fiction in that it does not follow the story of an archetypal singular “hero” character but rather that of a man who is living solely for his son. This portrayal is in stark contrast to other post-apocalyptic fictions, such as *I Am Legend* (Matheson, 1954); the protagonist of *I Am Legend*, Neville, is a solitary man who lives in isolation from the world, relying on his own initiative as a man in order to survive. The isolation of Neville, and his reliance on his abilities as a solitary man, could be seen as a more archetypal portrayal of a “hero”, unlike the character of the father in *The Road*, who relies on his son for emotional sustenance. The novel can be read as a Grail Narrative, as the characters are moving toward an ultimate goal; the Grail Narrative can also be seen in the character of the “dying father” embarking on a quest to preserve the life of his son, whom he imagines as a chalice. The grail quest Narrative can be considered to have originated with King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table, as they go on a journey to search for the Holy Grail – the chalice supposedly used by Jesus Christ at the last supper, and the vessel believed to have caught the blood of Christ during his crucifixion. I apply this myth to *The Road*, as every person who attempts the grail quest is male, bringing to the myth an inherent sexism and misogynistic quality (Lacy, 1986: 295), just as the focal characters in *The Road* are predominantly male. I will discuss, in conjunction with the theme of the father-and-son relationship seen in the novel, the portrayal of women, the Grail Narrative and the issue of “home” and “homelessness”. I argue that McCarthy has created a male “hero” in the character of the father who does not conform to the somewhat hegemonic ideals of a typical post-apocalyptic “hero”, subverting the idea that men, as fathers, cannot be nurturing.

The father in the novel can be seen as a subversion of the role divisions usually seen within families portrayed in literature. He plays the role of both a protective father and a nurturing mother for his son, due to the fact that the character of the mother is absent for the majority of the novel. As his wife committed suicide, the man has become a “lone father”, a “man who has sole care over his child without interaction from the mother figure” (O’Brien, 1982: 184). His “lone fatherhood” causes the character to subvert patriarchal and hegemonic norms by both protecting and nurturing his son. In order to further understand the gender role transition the father undergoes, I made use of a study undertaken concerning homeless fathers, by Holly Schindler. While the father in *The Road* is not a conventional “homeless” father, I argue that the “gender role strain” theory in the study applies to the character. Schindler states that, “[i]nherent in masculine gender roles are standard criteria by which many men measure themselves [...] qualitative studies have suggested that single fathers have difficulties playing both provider and nurturer” (41). I use this quotation in relation to the father in the novel, as his difficulty in having to play both mother and father is clear; his paternal need to protect could be seen as oppressive, as he does not maintain any relationships with any other characters in the novel, choosing to rather uphold their father-and-son relationship as a “solitary unit” (Sottosanti, 2011: 5). This causes the son to become “socially desperate for others in his life” (5). An important example of the son’s desperation for “others in his life” can be seen when he sees another young boy in a town he and his father are passing through. The son sees a “face looking at him”, “belonging to a boy, about his age” (McCarthy, 2006: 88); he runs after this boy, yelling: “Come back [...] I wont [sic]<sup>3</sup> hurt you” (88). The use of the phrase “I wont hurt you” (88) shows that the son wishes to befriend the other young boy, to bring him into his own life, and have interactions with another human being. The reality of this “other boy” is brought into question, however, as when the son runs after the “other boy” he sees that there is “no one there” (88), and the “other” young boy has seemingly disappeared. The reality of this “other boy” is questioned once more when the father finds his son crying, and asks, “What are you doing? [Boy] There’s a little boy, Papa. There’s a little boy. [Man] There’s no little boy” (88). The son is near hysterical, sobbing to his father, “I just wanted to see him”, and when asked if he “wants to die” – after leaving the

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<sup>3</sup> McCarthy habitually avoids the use of apostrophes to indicate contractions throughout the novel, as one can see from the quotations I have utilised in my argument. I maintain that he does this in order to show the speech patterns of the father-and-son dyad, as I explain further in this section and to show the reader the decline of language in the post-apocalyptic setting; as McCarthy uses this writing technique so often, I found it pertinent to mention that it is because of the frequency of his lack of apostrophes in words such as “dont” [sic] and “wont” [sic] I will not use the notation “[sic]” after each such word.

safety of his father's gaze to chase after this "other boy" – the son replies, "I dont care" (89). I argue that this "other boy" can be seen as a figment created by the son because of the loneliness he feels within the father-and-son relationship, which is highlighted by the son's pleas about the "other boy", that they, "go get him and take him with [them]" (90); his craving for other company illustrates the oppressive nature of the father's protection. This relationship dynamic relates to the study by Schindler, in that the father is attempting to care for his son, despite their "homeless" status, but is perhaps being overly protective of their father-son unit.

A major aspect, which ties into the dynamic of the father-and-son relationship in *The Road*, is that of the son's "initiation into manhood" by the father character. There is a flashback to the father's childhood which is echoed throughout the daily lives of the dyad; the father reminisces about a day he spent looking for firewood with his uncle: "He sat in the back of the rowboat while his uncle bent to the oars [...] Neither of them had spoken a word. This was the perfect day of his childhood. This was the day to shape the days upon" (McCarthy, 12-13). This scene could be considered to be depicting a typical masculine bonding activity, as the characters are sitting in a comfortable silence as they perform a masculine task of searching for firewood, the fuel which provides heat, light and a place to cook. The line, "This was the day to shape the days upon" (13), is prophetic, in that the father and son do in fact spend every waking hour foraging for firewood and food. In this way, the man is sharing his knowledge with the boy; he is initiating his son into manhood by teaching him how to survive in the post-apocalyptic landscape. In relation to the father-and-son bonding, one must look to the language used when the father and son speak to each other, and when the surroundings are described in the novel. McCarthy's descriptions and dialogues are stark and minimal, heightening the bleakness of the situation of the protagonists. The stilted dialogue is something which I found notable, as one could read it as an example of how men – and fathers and sons – speak to one another. The mother in the novel is portrayed as speaking the most, and gives a long, poignant speech to her husband which lasts for longer than five lines. The father and son speak in short sentences, and only when speaking is necessary do they interact, as seen in this example: "The boy turned in the blankets. Then he opened his eyes. Hi, Papa, he said. [Man:] I'm right here. [Boy:] I know." (McCarthy, 3). This short exchange between father and son illustrates to the reader, from the very beginning of *The Road*, that the conversation will be stiff and to the point. Arielle Zibrak theorises that, in the absence of the "living idiom he knew and the collection of extant references to which it could refer, the man

creates his own language for himself and the boy” (106). The man uses terms such as “good guys”, “carrying the fire” and “bad guys”, and applies to them his own reverent meanings causing these simple words to contain a deeper import in the mind of his son. Zibrak postulates that the “only culture the boy has ever known is the one that has been constructed for him by the man” (106). I concur with this opinion and argue that the father, while he can be seen as a subversion of hegemonic norms, is creating for his son a heteronormative and androcentric culture. McCarthy’s elimination of a stable mother-figure creates a situation in which the boy’s observation and imitation of his father are inevitable, as he has no other figure to follow; his father is “central to the boy’s understanding of each event in his capacity as both a participant and a creator of ideological structure” (Zibrak, 2012: 107). The father in *The Road* attempts to create a successful father-and-son relationship, reminiscent of the one he had with his own father, something which is not applicable to the situation in which the characters find themselves. This is seen in an incident in which the father brings his son to his childhood home, a place which holds nostalgia for the father but which is simply a place which holds potential terror and danger for the son. Their conversation goes as follows:

[Boy] Are we going in? [Man] Why not? [Boy] I’m scared. [Man] Dont you want to see where I live? [Boy] No. [Man] It’ll be okay [Boy] There could be somebody there. [Man] I dont think so. [Boy] But suppose there is? (McCarthy, 2006: 25)

The father’s return to the “ancestral home” is rendered pointless, and Zibrak argues that McCarthy could be seen to be alluding to the literal “dilapidation” of the “traditional family structure” (108).

In relation to this incident, I feel it necessary to address the issue of the definition of “home” with regard to the protagonists. Rosemary Marangoly George defines “home”, in the English novel, as being “fixed, rooted, stable [...] the very antidissertation of travel” (1996: 2), as previously quoted. The father in the novel is unable to provide for his son a safe, fixed and stable “home”; the father does, however, manage to find a bunker in an abandoned yard which proves life-saving, as it contains unspoiled food and water and has electricity and a chemical toilet. Despite having finally found an oasis in the ashen land, the father is portrayed as having a feeling of unease in the bunker, as one can see from this exchange between father and son: “[Boy] How long can we stay here Papa? [Man] I dont know. Maybe one more day. Two. [Boy] Because it’s dangerous. [Man] Yes” (McCarthy, 2006: 157). The disquiet the father experiences could most obviously be attributed to his fear that

they will be discovered and subsequently harmed by other people, but one could also attribute his unease as being a result of the fact that the bunker is not something which *he himself* has built and provided for his son. A quotation from Schindler's study on homeless fathers who were living in shelters illustrates this point:

“Becoming homeless felt really bad. And I know it did because I'm a man and I'm supposed to take care of my wife and kids. And it was like I was in a helpless situation. I couldn't provide [...] And, being in a homeless shelter [...], you still have that feeling inside of worthlessness”. (2007: 46)

While the father in *The Road* did not become homeless by his own personal actions, I contend that this quotation is applicable to him, especially with regard to the restlessness he feels whilst in the bunker. Earlier in the novel, while they are discussing the mother's choice of suicide, she says to the man, “You cant protect us” (McCarthy, 2006: 56). This remark on his inability to protect them is emphasised by the fact that the only shelter he is able to find is not one which he has built or paid for with his own hands or money; as the aforementioned quote from Schindler's study states, “becoming homeless” for men is hard, as they can no longer protect and provide for their families, and one could see the father's displeasure at being unable to build his own shelter as his own questioning of his masculinity as his wife had done earlier. According to a quotation George uses from Douglas Porteous, “home provides both the individual and the small primary group known as the family with all three territorial satisfactions [identity, security, stimulation]” (21). I use this quotation with regard to *The Road*, as I assert that “home” and identity are two important themes in the novel; one can see the relationship between “home” and identity in the scene in which the father shows his son the house he (the father) was raised in: “[T]hey came upon an old frame house with chimneys and gables and a stonewall. The man stopped [...] [Boy] What is this place, Papa? [Man] It's the house I grew up in” (McCarthy, 2006: 25). They enter the house and the father recalls pleasantly mundane memories of his life, such as tacking Christmas stockings above the fireplace and the room in which he slept; all of these memories are part of “home”, but more importantly, they are a part of the man's identity. The boy is scared when the father stands in the living room, and watches “shapes claiming him he could not see” (26), an obvious metaphor for the memories his father is experiencing. I theorise that the boy is portrayed as feeling scared because he has no “home”, no physical location which he may revisit or reminisce about, thus seeing his father being able to recall pieces of himself from a “home” unnerves the boy, as he is the only truly “homeless” character; this ties into the idea

of “home” being strongly related to the creation of identity, as the boy has had no “home”, or “home”-*life* to model his identity upon – he simply has to mould himself on his father and his father’s *stories* of “home” and what the world used to be. George also speaks of the importance of the “personalisation of the home”, meaning the placing of one’s own identity on the “home” (1996: 22). This is something which neither character is able to do, as they do not have their own “home”.

An incident earlier in the novel, which could be seen to add to the boy’s fear of his father’s “home”, is one which paints a gruesome picture of how the novel’s antagonists have perverted the idea of “home”. The father and son wander through a “once grand house” (105) which is now completely dilapidated and ruined; they find inside this shell of splendour a basement full of naked people, whilst on the only mattress in the room “lay a man with his legs gone to the hip and the stumps of them blackened and burnt. The smell was hideous” (110). It is clear to see that the cannibals have taken this abandoned building and have made it their “home”; technically, according to George’s definition of “home” as being “fixed, rooted, stable [...] the very antithesis of travel” (1996: 2) as I have quoted earlier, it is not incorrect to use this adjective for the grotesque house in which the cannibals live, and in this case, they are more “able” than the father, as they have found shelter and a “home”. One could see this as a comment on hegemonic society on McCarthy’s part, in that the more brutal, stronger people (the cannibals) have power over the weaker (the father and son) and have simply taken what they needed with no regard for morality.

Morality is an underlying theme one can see when examining one of the most prominent subjects in *The Road*, which is the negative portrayal of and near elimination of female characters, most notably the mother figure. This relates to the heteronormative culture the father has formed for his son, which I mentioned earlier. The portrayal of the mother is negative, as she is depicted as abandoning her husband and son by committing suicide. Her choice to end her life is a pragmatic one, and she justifies it by saying to the man, ““They are going to rape us and kill us and eat us and you wont face it”” (McCarthy, 2006: 56). Her words ring true for almost all the female characters, and some young male characters, as McCarthy describes in this scene:

The phalanx following carried spears or lances tassled with ribbons [...] Behind them came wagons drawn by slaves in harness and piled with goods of war and after that the women, perhaps a dozen in number, some of them pregnant, and lastly, a

supplementary consort of catamites illclothed against the cold and fitted in dog collars and yoked each to each. (96)

The women and boys are treated as mere “things” by the stronger male cannibals and are used as slaves and as sexual objects. I believe that this could be seen as a metaphor for a hegemonic society, as the male cannibals have power over those who are weaker than they, most prominently the female characters.

A notable aspect of the portrayal of the mother character is the fact that she is shown only through dreams and memory. Maggie Hirt surmises that this “pushes the role of women to the periphery of critical discourse [...] also in the narrative itself – where female characters are shown only in brief, terrifying flashes” (2011: 5). I believe that McCarthy writes in this manner in order to enhance for the reader the strength of the father-and-son bond; by portraying the character of the mother through flashbacks, he eliminates her presence from the man’s and boy’s lives, creating a “male-governed society” (6). The mother is depicted as being somewhat harsh in her pragmatism, as she says to the man, “You cant protect us” (McCarthy, 2006: 58); this shows that she has lost her belief in his role as protector. Her words could be seen as questioning his masculine abilities, as a father and husband (Wielenberg, 2010: 12). McCarthy’s depiction of the mother character as abandoning her family could be seen as echoing the story of the biblical character, Eve. The mother in *The Road* is blamed by the man for their bleak, lonely existence, just as Eve is blamed by Judaism and Christianity for her and Adam’s expulsion from the Garden of Eden (Hirt, 2011: 6). Hirt makes this connection by using the definition of “apocalypse” as being “a disaster resulting in drastic, irreversible damage” (6). The first “apocalypse”, according to Hirt, was the story of Adam and Eve, in that, because of Eve’s persuading of Adam to eat the forbidden fruit, she brings about their expulsion from Eden, and a life of “nudity, childbirth and death” (6). McCarthy builds on this idea of “blaming” Eve for the condition of society and creates a female character who is presented as culpable for the condition of the father and son’s painful existence in a post-apocalyptic world (6).

The boy in *The Road* longs for a maternal presence, going so far as to wish to be with her, despite having the knowledge that she is dead. His father chastises him for this, as can be seen in this scene:

[Boy] I wish I was with my mom. He didn't answer. He sat beside the small figure wrapped in the quilts and blankets. After a while he said: [Man] You musnt say that [...] It's a bad thing to say. (McCarthy, 2006: 56)

One could see this scolding as a further negative comment on the mother's choice to end her life, instead of remaining alive to care for her husband and son. The father does not want his son to follow in the footsteps of his mother, a "deserter", for he is after all the one who "carries the fire". I use the term "deserter", as Hirt ascertains four different roles for the female characters in *The Road*: "deserter, murderer, cannibal and survivalist" (6). The role of deserter can be applied to the character of the mother as McCarthy depicts her as "destroying the strength found in the family paradigm" by "deserting" her husband and son to avoid a horrific future which she believed inevitable (6). McCarthy does not eliminate the figure of a mother completely in his novel, as one can see in the ending of the grim tale. The son is found by a family, and the mother in this family is mentioned in a more positive light: "The woman when she saw him put her arms around him and held him. Oh, she said, I am so glad to see you" (306). This mother figure can be seen as redemption for the boy's biological mother, as this second mother is nurturing and caring towards the son. She teaches the boy about God and does not chastise him when he manages to only "speak" to his late father, rather than to God, which one can see as the maternal tenderness the young boy has been longing for. Despite this woman's portrayal as a positive *mother* figure, one could argue that as a *female* figure she is merely inserted into the story to serve as a "third party to the encouragement and continuation of the man's myth" (Zibrak, 2011: 123), as one can see in her statement that "the breath of God was his [the son's] breath yet though it pass from man to man through all of time" (McCarthy, 2006: 306). Zibrak argues that this female figure, while positively portrayed, is used only to "reestablish the heteronormative culture ruptured when the boy's mother died" (2011: 123), which strengthens the masculine society McCarthy has created in his novel.

According to Hirt, the mother figure represents "beauty [...] gives children a sense of joy and pleasure, whereas the father, who represents the sublime", is an "authority figure" (7); I agree with this statement and argue that McCarthy's barren and bleak landscape is portrayed as being without beauty or life because the mother figure is no longer alive, thus her beauty is no longer present in the lives of the father and son. The landscape is "void of the feminine" (Hirt, 2011: 7). One could see the cataclysmic event as a man-made ecological disaster – for lack of an explanation by McCarthy – which destroyed the earth, something which was once

abundant with life and often likened to a fertile woman. McCarthy's portrayal of the landscape as something decaying and ugly is a further elimination of the feminine in the novel. The "event" is man-made, possibly a nuclear blast, as it is described as "a long shear of light and then a series of low concussions" (54) and the aftermath is described as "nights dark beyond darkness and the days more gray each one than what had gone before. Like the onset of some cold glaucoma dimming away the world" (3); a nuclear blast, or a bomb or explosion of such magnitude, would have obliterated the natural world, as one can see from McCarthy's descriptions of "smouldering trees", "cauterized terrain" and "charred remains" (13). The "event" destroyed an abundant earth, and one could see this as McCarthy "destroying" any place for a female character in the world of the father-and-son dyad, and eliminating any other possible roles for the mother character aside from that of "deserter"; he has made the post-apocalyptic world androcentric and masculine in order to create a survivalist setting which is almost exclusively male.

This masculine survivalist setting relates to the theme of the grail quest in *The Road*, one which I believe ties together the portrayal of female characters in the novel and the main theme of the father-and-son relationship. I begin this section with an explanation of the grail quest, starting with its Arthurian origins. The grail quest is considered to be wholly masculine as the derivation of the grail quest and grail quest narrative could be seen to have begun with the myth of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table (Cooper, 2011: 219), as has been stated earlier. The Knights, under King Arthur's command, undertake what is considered to be the "greatest quest of all" (220), that being the quest for the Holy Grail, the chalice from which it is said Jesus Christ drank at the Last Supper. The Knights are said to have failed in their task, which angers King Arthur as he realises that this failure will bring about the weakening of his kingdom, Camelot. A young man by the name of Parsifal volunteers to embark on the quest himself, thus we have the legend of "Parsifal and the Fisher King". The Fisher King keeps in his castle the Holy Chalice and the Holy Spear, the objects of King Arthur's quest. The chalice is a feminine object, a rounded goblet much like the womb of a woman. It is also a vessel, similar to that of a female in that the feminine body is a "vessel" for a child. The spear is a phallic symbol, representative of the male reproductive organ. Jessie Weston explains the bifurcation of the Spear and Chalice in this manner:

But Lance and Cup (or Vase) were in truth connected together in a symbolic relation long ages before the institution of Christianity, or the birth of the Celtic tradition. They are sex symbols [...] the Lance or Spear, representing the Male, the Cup, or Vase, the Female, reproductive energy. (1920: 72)

It is the joining of these two objects which brings about healing, much as the joining of the phallus and the womb created the boy in *The Road*, who is considered by his father to be the “savior” of the post-apocalyptic world. The portrayal of the chalice as a womb, or feminine object, is important with regard to *The Road*, as one could see the son as questing and yearning for a female presence in his life, one which he is without for the bulk of the novel. The chalice is seen by some scholars as the vessel used to catch the blood of Christ during his crucifixion (72); blood is a life-giving substance, which relates to the idea of the chalice as a womb or as feminine, as a womb gives life in childbirth. I assert that the son is the metaphorical “blood” which gives his father “life”, in the form of being his father’s “warrant” (McCarthy, 2006: 3).

Parsifal is portrayed as having been “raised in the wilderness”, as the boy in *The Road* has been. Parsifal’s mother later dies of grief after her only son leaves their woodland home for Camelot, in pursuit of the Knights with whom he has become enraptured (Cooper, 2011: 219). The similarities between Parsifal and the boy in *The Road* are many as the boy, too, aspires to become like the “heroes” in his father’s stories and he has also lost his mother to a form of grief at what will become of them in the wasteland of the future. Parsifal, in the myth of “Parsifal and the Fisher King”, and the characters the father and the son in *The Road* must all overcome obstacles in order to reach their “grail”; Parsifal must fight another knight, and succeeds in doing so, donning the defeated knight’s armour in triumph, and the father and son must navigate their way across a land fraught with danger and death in search for the “coast” (221). Both stories almost completely eliminate the feminine in their narrative. A female character in “Parsifal and the Fisher King” is portrayed merely as a sexual object whom Parsifal “deflowers” and there are few other women mentioned in the text; this leads one to the deduction that grail quest narratives are centred on male characters. The fact that the female character in Parsifal’s myth is simply seen as a sexual object is echoed in the scene in *The Road* where the father and son witness the convoy of cannibals, which includes several women who have obviously been used sexually, as many are pregnant.

The Fisher King in the Arthurian Holy Grail myth is dying, as is the father in *The Road*, and both are striving toward a “healing grail”, which is needed to destroy the moral decay caused by the Fisher King’s wound; in the case of McCarthy’s novel, however, the “wound” is the destruction caused by man (222). One can see a major difference in the myth of “Parsifal and the Fisher King” and the story of *The Road* in the portrayal of the “grail” itself. In the Arthurian saga, the Holy Grail is a *physical* chalice, whereas in *The Road* the boy is the grail, he is “good to house a god” (McCarthy, 2006: 64). One can see that the young boy is portrayed as being the “grail” and the “grail bearer” *together*, as Cooper asserts that “the early grail narratives have in common a thematic insistence on the purity of the grail bearer as an essential component of the grail’s ability to return to humankind” (223); the boy has this purity which is essential for the healing of humankind, and Cooper states that “because the grail cannot appear in substantial form in the human realm without an appropriate bearer, the bearer ineffably becomes part of the grail” (224). I maintain that the son in *The Road*, however, cannot be compared to Parsifal in that sense, as Parsifal has knowingly undertaken the grail quest, thus assigning *unto himself* the identity of “grail bearer”, whereas the father in *The Road* sees his son as the grail, and assigns that identity to the boy in his own consciousness, without consulting his son as to whether he is willing or able to assume such a paramount role. This relates to the section I discussed earlier regarding the father-and-son relationship as being somewhat oppressive from the father’s side, as he has come to rely on his son for his own emotional sustenance and as a moral compass.

When relating *The Road* to the myth of Parsifal and the Fisher King, one must examine the character of the Fisher King in more depth. The Fisher King, according to both Cooper and Weston, is portrayed as two characters, that of a king dying of old age and a wounded king dying from his injuries. Weston asserts that Chretien de Troye’s poem *Le Romain de Perceval au le Conte du Graal* (Perceval: The Story of the Grail) is the first to present to the reader these two “disabled kings”, and argues that he introduces them as a “literary device, intended to combine two existing variants” (1920: 115). Weston theorises that the “Fisher King” (the older man whom Parsifal meets in the boat) and the “Maimed King” (the wounded king in the castle) are “different aspects of the same personality” and were “represented as individuals” (116). Cooper elaborates on this, saying that, in the earlier legends, the elder and younger, wounded Fisher Kings are “the same person” (2011: 226). I mention this fact as I posit that one could see the father in *The Road* as the Fisher King, both the elderly king and the younger wounded king at once. He is not elderly but his age does affect him, most

particularly with regard to his health, as he is not able to recover from his illness. The fact that he *is* ill makes the character easily identifiable as a representation of the Fisher King. The father is also wounded in his leg after being hit by an arrow while he and his son are walking through yet another desolate town, as is described in this scene:

As they passed the last of the sad wooden buildings something whistled past his head and clattered off the street and broke up against the wall of the block building on the other side [...] He heard the dull thwang of the bowstring and felt a sharp hot pain in his leg. (McCarthy, 2006: 281)

One can see this as a direct link between the father in *The Road* and the Fisher King, as in Chretien's version of the myth, the Fisher King has been wounded in his leg, sometimes translated as being wounded in the groin (Weston, 1920: 111).

It is interesting to note that once the Fisher King has been wounded – whether in his leg or groin – the entire kingdom falls into disarray, with “the meadows and flowers [...] dried up and the waters shrunken” (Sanderson, 2007: 1). The landscape in *The Road* echos this desolation, being described as a “colourless world of wire and crepe” (McCarthy, 2006: 123), with natural surroundings that are “raw and black” and “cold and illucid” (123). Grail quest narratives, especially those set in a post-apocalyptic landscape, focus on what is “ruined in the world, what is diseased” and “attempt to explain why death is transcendent and not fertility” (Cooper, 2011: 229). Here once again, the absence of fertility and the prevailing barrenness of McCarthy's wasteland landscape show that no grail quest can be played out in the presence of a female, whether it be physical (the character of the mother) or metaphorical (the earth as a fecund feminine existence). The “curing” of the wasteland too is an underlying question in McCarthy's novel, as asserted by Cooper (229); I concur with this as it is obvious throughout the novel that the father sees his son as the “cure” or “salvation” of not only himself, but of the world too. The question of how to “cure” the wasteland is, according to Cooper, answered by “the spontaneous act of a noble heart, whose impulse is not of ego but of love – and love in the sense not of sexual love, but of compassion” (230). One can see that the son in *The Road* embodies this compassion, especially in the scene involving the thief, which reads:

[Man] If you dont put down the knife and get away from the cart [...],I'm going to blow your brains out [...] [Boy] Papa? [...] Papa please dont kill the man. [Man]

Stop it. [Boy] I cant stop it [...] [Man] What do you want to do? [Boy] Just help him Papa. Just help him. (McCarthy, 2006: 274-7)

The son is clearly illustrating here his compassion as, despite the fact the man his father will so harshly punish has tried to rob them, the young boy wants only to help this stranger, and is saddened by the fact that his father has retaliated and punished this other man. The father does not possess the same compassion. One can therefore see that the son is a representation of the “grail” in human form, as his compassion will bring “healing” to the wasteland in which he and his father find themselves. Relating to the Fisher King myth and its similarity with *The Road*, one must examine the theme of inheritance seen in the novel. According to Weston, the Parsifal character is always portrayed as being a close blood relative to the Fisher King (1920: 45), and the “hero” or “grail bearer” must have a “blood inheritance connecting him to the grail” (Cooper, 2011: 227). The son in McCarthy’s novel is set to “succeed” his father “metaphorically” by continuing to “carry the fire”, or to continue the goodness his father wishes him to embody (227). One could say that the son will inherit a broken, damaged earth after his father dies; this inheritance is not applicable only to the young boy but to the remainder of the survivors too. I assert that another aspect of this theme of “inheritance” is the fact that the son has “inherited” his father’s ideals of the “good guys” and “bad guys”, and also his father’s stories, and perhaps he has inherited his memories from his father too. An exchange between the father-and-son dyad illustrates this:

[Man] Why dont you tell me a story? [Boy] I dont want to. [Man] Okay. [Boy] I dont have any stories to tell. [Man] You could tell me a story about yourself. [Boy] You already know all the stories about me. You were there. (McCarthy, 2006: 287)

Here one can see that the son realises that his own history, his own story, is one that is not truly his own, but rather one that his father knows and has created and taught to him.

Weston mentions an intriguing observation regarding the Fisher King and I believe it can be applied to the father in *The Road*. Weston states that the “Fish is a Life symbol of immemorial antiquity and [...] the title of the Fisher King has, from the earliest ages, been associated with Deities who were held to be especially connected with origin and the preservation of Life” (120). One can apply the role of the “Fisher” as “preserver of Life” directly to the father in *The Road*, as he has promised to both himself and his son that he will “kill anyone who touches you”, as he was “appointed to do that by God” (McCarthy, 2006:

80). While I do not believe that Weston is speaking of the preservation of life by means of violence, I do believe that the father can be seen as this “Fisher Deity” as his entire existence is devoted to the preservation of his son’s life, as I mention above. Weston speaks of ancient Fisher Deities in the form of Vishnu, the male Creator in Indian cosmogony, and of the Chinese goddess of Mercy and Salvation, Kwanyin (1920: 120). Vishnu is represented as a “golden fish” and Kwanyin is shown as either holding or sitting upon a fish (120). The father in *The Road* can be seen as similarly related to aquatic settings, as he is “affiliated with water” throughout the entire novel (Cooper, 2011: 226); his flashback to his “perfect day” involves him in a rowing boat on a lake (226), and while it is never clearly said that he is fishing, it is clear that the father has a “consistent affinity for water” (227). This is seen again when he attempts to teach his son to swim in an “ash-choked” pond (McCarthy, 2006: 33), and in the fact that they are journeying toward “the coast”, near which is the ocean, a vast body of water (Cooper, 2011: 227). One can see the connection between the father and the Fisher King if one considers the fact that the Fisher King is not merely associated with “fishing” but is more connected to “appearing on the water in general” (227). It is interesting to note that Weston speaks of the Fisher Deity as being *either* female or male, as the Fisher King is exclusively male. The “Fisher Deity” or Fisher King in *The Road* is a male, in keeping with the Christian connection of the fish with Christ, who became a man. In doing this, McCarthy has yet again eliminated a female presence as a “preserver of Life”, subverting the notion that it is the mother who must nurture, by creating a male character who gives his all (including his life) to protect his son. I mention once more the second mother figure in the novel in relation to this, as one could argue that her inclusion in the text, albeit brief, shows that McCarthy is reintroducing a nurturing mother figure. I argue that this character is not a “Fisher Deity”, as the son continues to be nurtured by, and lives on because of, his father’s memory, who is the “Fisher Deity”, or Fisher King, of *The Road*.

Regarding the Fish and its connotations of Life symbolism, I maintain that one must examine the ending of *The Road* in this light. The ending is a scene of a stream full of “brook trout”, a scene of renewed life shown through a memory, as one can see by McCarthy’s use of the past tense in the first sentence of the final paragraph: “Once there were brook trout in the streams in the mountains” (306). The fish are described as being “polished and muscular and torsional” (307), meaning that they are brimming with life and health; I allege that this depiction of the fish establishes the fact that the Fish is a “Life” symbol. The final line of the novel, “In the deep glens where they lived all things were older than man and they hummed

of mystery” (307), could be seen as a comment on mankind and how humans will always battle to understand the “mystery” of nature which we strive to control. The entire novel could be seen as a commentary on how human society is attempting to control nature, so much so that one day, we will destroy what we need to survive. McCarthy could also be seen as alluding to how the world was before the “event” by speaking in the past tense, as in the present setting of the novel, there is little animal life and the bodies of water he has described have been “ash-choked” and are not conducive to life, as is seen when the father and son come upon a dam, and the son asks, “Do you think there could be fish in the lake? [Man] No. There’s nothing in the lake” (20). The lack of life in the lake mentioned earlier in the novel is another example of how “death is transcendent and not fertility” (Cooper, 2011: 229), once more re-establishing the fact that the earth is now barren, and excludes a feminine presence. According to Briohny Doyle, *The Road* presents nature as “intrinsically related to masculinity, either as a space into which the protagonist can retreat to enact masculine practices, or as an imperiled category, mirroring the condition of masculine crisis through its vulnerability in the present moment” (2012: 3).

Throughout the intriguing and sometimes shocking novel *The Road*, McCarthy has subverted the ideal that the post-apocalyptic setting reveals a “tough, masculine, authentic self [...] in the face of catastrophe” (Doyle, 2012: 6). The protagonist has chosen to forgo focusing on the present, on his own survival, and has instead chosen to focus on “creating a legacy for the future”, and living for his son (9). The novel challenges the stereotypical “survivor” characters seen in texts such as *I Am Legend* and puts forward a male character who is not hegemonically masculine but nurturing toward his son, who is weaker than himself. I argue that the near complete elimination of positive female characters in the novel is used by McCarthy to highlight the protagonist’s choice of a masculinity which opposes hegemonic masculinity; McCarthy chooses to show a male character in a post-apocalyptic setting who has a degree of tenderness in him rather than being the archetypal “Tough Guy Outsider” (10) commonly seen in post-apocalyptic literature.

## Conclusion

My primary concern in this dissertation has been to explore the alternative masculinities to hegemonic masculinity the authors of my three primary texts have offered to the reader, and to examine how these masculinities are realised in literature which is set in times of extreme crisis. The characteristics of a hegemonically masculine male are aggression, physical strength, domination, control over others and heterosexuality, as defined by Connell (2009: 48); these hegemonic ideals have been carried forth from society into literature, specifically literature concerning the actions and reactions of men in texts set in times of extreme crisis, and it is this observation which inspired my choice of research topic. I argue that the authors of the three primary texts, *Bitter Eden* (2002), *King Rat* (, 1975) and *The Road* (2006), all depict male characters who subvert the monolithic ideals of hegemonic masculinity and choose to follow viable alternative masculinities instead; these choices are largely due to the characters' surroundings and situations, which is central to my argument that, when male characters are faced with situations of extreme crisis, the authors do not have to maintain the hegemonic ideal of a "hero" or hegemonic male but can portray a male character as following a different masculinity path.

I provide examples of hegemonically masculine protagonists from novels such as Stephen Ambrose's 1992 novel *Band of Brothers*, Pierre Boulle's *The Bridge Over The River Kwai* (1954) and *I am Legend*, also written in 1954 by Richard Matheson, in order to compare the protagonists from my chosen novels to these archetypal soldier and post-apocalyptic hero characters. *Band of Brothers* and *The Bridge Over The River Kwai* are both World War II novels which have male characters that portray the "ultimate soldier", in that they are shown to be the "toughest of the tough" (Ambrose, 1992: 39), as performing "masculine heroics" (Schmidt, 2011: 81) and as having a "dauntless spirit" (Boulle, 1954: 94). The timeline of each novel in this dissertation holds a degree of importance, in that the different era in which each novel is set shows the reader the society of the time's attitude toward and ideals of masculinity. The fact that both *Band Of Brothers* and *The Bridge Over The River Kwai* are set within the same World War II time frame of *Bitter Eden* and *King Rat* assists in showing that during this time frame, the attitude was that soldiers were held to high standards of masculinity and the literature of the time emulated this; however, Afrika and Clavell's novels challenge the ideals of this society by portraying characters who choose to follow homosocial

masculine principles. *The Road* is set in a post-apocalyptic landscape, much like *I Am Legend*, and while Matheson's novel was written in the year 1954, the standard "hero" character he portrays is still seen in post-apocalyptic literature today. Matheson's protagonist is a lone man who must eradicate a vampiric scourge, and as he has no dependants nor does he depend on anyone, he is, as Briohny Doyle categorises, a "Tough Guy Outsider" (2012: 5). The father character in *The Road* does not conform to this "Tough Guy Outsider" character, as his sole purpose, as is seen thorough the novel, is to keep his son safe; he shows a love and devotion to another human being which is unseen in novels in the same vein such as *I Am Legend*. McCarthy's novel does, however, have an undercurrent of misogyny, in that the novel almost eliminates all female presence, most notably the mother figure. I maintain that while some may read this as a negative aspect, it is simply employed by McCarthy in order to illustrate the fact that the young male's journey into manhood cannot take place in the company of females, and his knowledge of the world must be passed down to him by his father or father figure.

When examining the three novels, I use the theories of Raewyn Connell and Michael Kimmel, two of the most prominent theorists in Gender and Masculinity Studies. Connell's theory of hegemonic masculinity began with hegemony, a cultural theory from Antonio Gramsci which she adapted. Cultural hegemony is defined as "the domination of a diverse society by the 'ruling class'" (Gramsci, 1971: 400), and Connell used this in devising her theory of hegemonic masculinity, which is defined as "the practice that allowed men's dominance over women to continue" (Donaldson, 1993: 643), but in today's society, it can be redefined as allowing the more powerful men's dominance over the *weak* to continue. I applied this theory to the three chosen texts as I contend that hegemonic masculinity is relevant to each text with regard to its setting and society. *Bitter Eden* and *King Rat* are the novels which hegemonic masculinity and hegemonic practices relate to more prominently, as both concern the military, an institution which could be considered to be inherently masculine and hegemonic in its practices, as is asserted by Ali A. Mazrui in this quotation from his article, "The Warrior Tradition and the Masculinity of War": "Images of valour, courage, endurance, and maturity have, in different societies, been intimately related to the role of the male in social and military affairs" (69); these ideals were passed into literature as I have stated earlier and thus the novels of the time of both World War I and World War II, and many in later years concerning military activity, have continued these images. These images can also be seen in novels concerning the apocalypse or the post-apocalyptic landscape, as

one can see in *I Am Legend* and, more recently, in television series such as *The Walking Dead* (2010), which bears similarities to *The Road* in that the central figure of Rick Grimes in the series is focused on safe-guarding his son's life from the monstrosities of the post-apocalyptic world.

*Bitter Eden* is a novel which clearly confronts and challenges these views on masculinity. Afrika's novel follows the story of Thomas Smythe, a South African soldier who has been captured by Italian soldiers and detained in a Prisoner of War camp during World War II; it explores the intimate relationships which form among three men, namely, Thomas, Danny and Douglas, but what the novel does not touch upon are the acts of "valour, courage, endurance, and maturity" displayed by the soldiers. *Bitter Eden* instead shows the reader the human, emotional and indeed *breakable* side of men; it portrays characters who do not conform to what one would expect of a soldier and instead show a certain tenderness not usually found in World War II POW fiction. There is an obvious theme of "love" in the novel, which begins with a homosocial relationship between two of the male characters but eventually blooms into a same-sex attraction from both men. I propose that this is the most important aspect of the novel, as it is in opposition to the hegemonic ideals of the military. Stobie quotes Afrika's poignant assertion on the topic of "love", in the sexual and romantic sense, in these POW camps: "the love that at another time and place would have fled the stares of righteously affronted men, swans with but a flimsy covering through our sad dormitories for the lonely and deprived" (Stobie, 2005: 197). The continuing "love" between the main male characters is the focal point of the novel as, in the beginning, Thomas is shown as reading a letter from the man whom he grew to love, and while they have been separated by years and distance, Danny (the character whom Thomas reluctantly "falls in love" with) is shown to still have strong feelings for Thomas. This is strengthened by the fact that the letter appears to be a suicide note, and one can deduce the reason for the suicide may be the fact that Thomas never returned to Danny after their rescue and they return to the respective home countries. Thomas, too, has a reaction which shows that he still had feelings for Danny:

Closer inspection betrayed the slight shakiness that is beginning to taint my own hand, and I noted this with an unwilling tenderness and a resurgence – as unwilling – of a love that time, it seems, has *too* lightly overlaid [...] Reaching for an expected pain, I had found only a numbness transcending pain. (Afrika, 2002: 1)

The aspect of “love” can also be seen in *King Rat*, although the “love” seen in this novel is more of a homosocial, brotherly bond than a repressed same-sex desire between the two characters. This bond between soldiers is not an uncommon theme in literature set in World War II, nor is it a bond which is unseen in life outside confinement, as Goldstein puts forward that male bonding within the military is “necessary for military units to fight successfully” (2001: 184). He asserts, from interviews he conducted with soldiers, that many fought “not for patriotism [...] but for their close buddies” (196), as has been mentioned previously. In Clavell’s novel one can see that a connection such as this is formed between Peter Marlowe and the King, most specifically in the fact that Peter Marlowe endangers himself to escape Changi with the King in order to help the American with a “black market” deal in the nearby village. On the trip back to the camp, the King and Marlowe encounter what they believe to be a Japanese soldier watching them in the gloom but soon realise that the man is dead from the bite of a snake. It is Peter Marlowe who saves the King, with his knowledge of the jungle fauna and, from the King’s thoughts afterwards, one can see that this has strengthened the bond between the men: “If it hadn’t been for Pete I’d be a dead duck” (Clavell, , 1975: 167). Their subsequent conversation shows that both men now hold each other in higher esteem:

“That’s the second time you have saved my neck” he [Peter Marlowe] whispered. “You got to the rifle first. If the Jap hadn’t been dead you’d’ve [*sic*] killed him. I was slow.” “Eh, I was just in front.” The King stopped, then grinned. “Hey Peter. We make a good team. With your looks and my brains, we do all right” (167).

One can see from this exchange that there are obvious camaraderie and friendship between the two characters. The protagonists have chosen to subvert the hegemonic view that one man or person should have power over those below him, and have instead chosen an equal, homosocially masculine relationship. I infer that this is a result of their situation, most notably the close confines of Changi camp.

Relating to the setting of the novel, I also explored the issue of same-sex attractions in the POW camps in both *Bitter Eden* and in *King Rat*. I used a study of Australian POWs by Willett and Small concerning same-sex desire in the military, and found it related to *King Rat* and the characters of Sean and Steven – the two same-sex attracted male characters in the novel. Willett and Small’s study speaks of “situational homosexuality”, a same-sex desire which arose due to the “enforced segregation from female society” (2013: 27). I apply this notion to the character of Sean in *King Rat*, as he is portrayed as *becoming* female, as I have

elucidated upon in the chapter concerning this novel; the character took on feminine attributes, eventually transforming into a man with same-sex tendencies due, in part, to his coercion to perform the female roles in the plays performed in the POW camp for the entertainment of the other inmates. I have argued that Sean is portrayed as transforming into an effeminate man because of his surroundings and the close confines with other men of the camp. Peter Marlowe uses the Asian theory of “yin and yang” to explain this, stating that the absence of women in the POW camp creates a natural imbalance (yang without yin), therefore an “instinctual drive” for balance means that some males will assume the “yin”, the soft female role. I propound that the premise of “situational homosexuality” suggested by Willet and Small and Peter Marlowe’s theory (one could see this as Clavell’s opinion projected onto his protagonist) of “yin and yang” do also apply to *Bitter Eden*, in that the main protagonists of Thomas and Danny at first “do not identify as being homosexual” (Stobie, 2005: 186), but later they experience conflicting emotions toward their sexuality due to the appalling conditions of the POW camp and their close proximity to each other and other male characters. In *Bitter Eden*, I found that the character of Douglas has similarities to that of Sean in *King Rat*, in that both men develop a form of “situational homosexuality” and both men experience PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) due to their transforming sexuality. PTSD was also known as “shell-shock”, “battle fatigue” and “male hysteria”, the last being a more offensive term for the ailment as the connotations are negative, aligning the mental illness with the supposed “hysteria” experienced by women in earlier eras (Showalter, 1984: 181), and men experiencing this “male hysteria” were seen as “simple, emotional, unthinking [...] and weak” (Roper, 2009: 7), lacking in any hegemonically masculine characteristics, and were thus considered, by the military and society in general, as “less than men” (Showalter, 1984: 181). I maintain that Afrika and Clavell include characters such as this, in order to illustrate the manner in which men reacted to their surroundings and to their own sexual identities in an era when it was expected of soldiers that they be strong, aggressive, mentally sound and overtly heterosexual. These authors have undermined this ideal by creating characters who experience a shift in their sexuality and thus their choice of masculinity. I opine that *The Road*’s lead character of the father also experiences a form of PTSD, in that he becomes a quiet, withdrawn man whose speech patterns are sparse and he is wary of others (this aspect of the character, however, could be seen to originate from the fact that, because of the cataclysmic “event” in the novel and its subsequent annihilation of all living things, other people have become ruthless, amoral cannibals); these personality

changes of becoming quieter and more withdrawn after experiencing trauma are consistent with features of PTSD (Showlater, 1984: 181).

A common thread throughout the three novels is that of class division. Although it is not a theme which is overtly shown in *The Road*, it is one which *Bitter Eden* and *King Rat* explore. *Bitter Eden*'s portrayal of class division is not one which is common, as it is based on sexual preference rather than rank or social standing. The same-sex attracted men of the camp are regarded as "funnies" (Afrika, 2002: 95), as being something "other" to the men who do not have same-sex tendencies. Thomas, while himself experiencing a physical and emotional attraction to Danny, shows homophobia toward the men regarded as being same-sex inclined and even shows this homophobia internally, toward himself, as one can see in his musing, "Am I one of *them*? Am I in love with a *man*?" (95) Here, one can deduce that the thought of having a same-sex attraction repulses Thomas, and thus he relegates men who display these propensities to a lower class than himself. Danny, Thomas's "mate", has similar reactions to the "funnies", even going so far as to physically injure another character who is considered to be a queer-inclined man. Thomas, despite his obvious misgivings, does take part in the plays performed by these undesirable men but gives them the demeaning moniker of "stage pervs" (Afrika, 2002: 137), once again showing that he regards these characters as being of a "lower class" than himself. One can see in *Bitter Eden* that military ranks are not mentioned nor held in high regard by the characters, and I maintain that this is because Afrika wishes to focus on the relationships between his characters, and eliminates military rank in order to illustrate to the reader that one's standing, whether in general society or the military microcosmic society, should not impact on one's choice of sexuality nor masculinity. *King Rat* is vastly different in respect to *Bitter Eden*'s non-mention of military rank, in that military rank is something which is central to Lieutenant Grey, the antagonist of the novel, and to the homosocial relationship of Peter Marlowe and the King. Lt Grey, as mentioned in the chapter on *King Rat*, is a man from a "lower" social class than Peter Marlowe and he deeply resents Marlowe for this. Grey is portrayed as being a bitter man who is obsessed with upholding military and hegemonic practices, despite the fact that this makes him widely unpopular with his fellow prisoners; he upholds the division between officers and enlisted men, one that the Japanese too instil in the camp, as can be seen by the fact that the American officers wish to join their men in the American hut, but "this was not allowed, for the Japanese had ordered that officers be separated from enlisted men" (Clavell, 1975: 23) as has been quoted before. Grey has a deeply ingrained ideal that class and cultural divides are important, and so labels Peter

Marlowe a “traitor” to the British and to his “class” for fraternising with the King (133). Grey begrudges Marlowe for the man’s “birth and accent”, aspects which Grey “wanted beyond all things and could never have” (31), showing the reader that the mindset of the time focused heavily on class division, even in situations in which this should have been disregarded in favour of survival. The King and Peter Marlowe are characters who, I believe, represent Clavell’s own thoughts regarding the military rank divisions, as the King is a Corporal and Peter Marlowe is a Royal Air Force (RAF) officer, yet the men form a close bond despite this.

In keeping with the aspect of class division and social class, I turn now to how this matter is portrayed in *The Road*. McCarthy divides the post-apocalyptic society into the groups of the “Good Guys” and the “Bad Guys”. The father-and-son dyad are the “Good Guys”, yet when one considers the archetypal portrayal of a “good guy”, one can see that the characters do not conform to this, in that they are not flourishing emotionally or physically, nor are they helping others as one would expect the “Good Guys” to do. The father and son are emaciated and malnourished and are isolated from all other company, while the “Bad Guys” (the cannibals of the novel) are well fed, physically strong and often travel in groups of three or more. One can deduce from the portrayal of the cannibals that the father and son are of a lower social “order” in this new world; they are seen as mere “objects” by the cannibals, as one can see in this scene, where the dyad encounter a man who is travelling with a group in a truck:

[Man] What are you eating? [Second Man] Whatever we can find.  
[Man] Whatever you can find. [Second Man] Yeah. He looked at the boy [...]  
[Man] Why are you looking at him? [Second Man] I can look where I  
want to. (McCarthy, 2006: 66-7)

The last line “I can look where I want to” (67) implies that the second man – who, it is implied, is a cannibal – feels as though he is of a higher standing and thus is able to regard the young boy as his next meal, and one can detect a threat in this statement and an implication that the father, as a “Good Guy”, is in fact powerless to stop this stronger, more powerful “Bad Guy” from looking at and doing whatever he feels like. Another instance in which the “Bad Guys” are shown as superior to the “Good Guys” is when the father and son discover a “grand” (105), yet dilapidated old house. Inside this husk of finery the two find a basement full of naked, terrified people including, lying on the only mattress, “a man with his

legs gone to the hip and the stumps of them blackened and burnt. The smell was hideous” (110). It is obvious to the reader that these poor souls are being kept for food, showing yet another class, one even “lower” than the father-and-son team. I propose that McCarthy’s social “classes” demonstrate the “survival of the fittest” hegemonic mindset one commonly sees in post-apocalyptic fiction. I examined the aspect of class division and social class in each novel as I felt that it related directly to cultural hegemony, and through that also to Connell’s hegemonic masculinity, as cultural hegemony is defined as “the domination of a diverse society by the ‘ruling class’” (Gramsci, 1971: 400), which one can see is applicable to all three novels in their respective portrayals of this aspect.

“Home” is a theme which one can see is relevant to class divide, specifically with regard to *The Road*. In McCarthy’s novel, the protagonists do not have a “home”, as defined by Rosemary Marangoly George as being “fixed, rooted, stable [...] the very antidissertation of travel” (1996: 2); the dyad are continually moving, thus making them “homeless” and, as mentioned above, this lowers their class in the view of the cannibals, as those ruthless characters do have a “home”, and I argue that this is the correct title for the “once grand” house which the cannibals occupy as it is within the bounds of George’s definition of being “fixed, rooted” and “stable” (2). The fact that the cannibals have a stable shelter relegates the travelling father-and-son pair to a less “capable” class. As already argued, the father in *The Road* does manage to find a suitable oasis of shelter, however, in the form of a bunker which has been left fully stocked with food, water and a chemical toilet; for a few days, the two live comfortably in this space but the father is portrayed as having a feeling of unease toward remaining there any longer, as has been previously asserted. One could see this apprehension as originating from the ever-present fear that they will be found and eaten by others, but one could also attribute it to the fact that this shelter is not something which the father *himself* has built or provided for his son, thus the character could be seen to feel emasculated by the fact that any shelter he finds for his son is something which others have left behind and which he must scavenge through for safety. “Home” is an obvious theme in *Bitter Eden* and *King Rat*, as both novels deal with the displacement of soldiers from their “home country” into a land in which they are not welcome and which is not their “home”. I mention here the phrase “home country” in relation to these two novels, as I believe that George’s suggestion that in “the very reference to a ‘home-country’ lies the indication that the speaker is away from home” (1999: 2) and the fact that the characters in *Bitter Eden* and *King Rat* are far from their “home countries” could be seen as rendering them metaphorically “homeless”, as they have been

taken from their “homes” and placed in an environment which is “not home”; “not home” is described by George as being foreign, distant and unknown, while “home” is close and known (1996: 4). Providing a “home” for oneself, and one’s family, is something which is considered to be very important to the construction of a man’s identity, as it shows that he is able to provide a place of safety for those in his care; the characters in the three novels I have chosen to discuss are unable to do this as their ability to provide anything, even for themselves, has been removed due to their circumstances. A quotation from Chris Dunton’s article on Tatamkhulu Afrika summarises this point, particularly with regard to the protagonists in *Bitter Eden* and to the characters in *King Rat*; it reads: “I desire and/or have a right to belong here, and yet sense and/or am told I do not” (Dunton, 2004: 150). The men in both World War II novels experience a geographical and psychological state of indeterminacy, as they do not *belong* in the country of their captors but long to feel a connection to *somewhere*, as “place” and “belonging” are important to the characters, and indeed to men universally, as these allow men to identify themselves and are aspects of their lives which they can directly control. A quotation by Afrika, noted by Stobie, in her article “Mother, Missus, Mate: Bisexuality in Tatamkhulu Afrika’s *Mr Chameleon* and *Bitter Eden*” reinforces my point, as Afrika states that “at the [...] psychological core of every prison experience, *wherever* it may occur, is the same three-headed monster of stasis, abandon[ment] and despair” (2005:190).

The male characters in *King Rat* are depicted as feeling detached from their “homes” and “home countries”, as one can see from the division of the huts into the respective captive countries, for example the “American” hut in which the King resides (Clavell, , 1975: 22). The fact that the men have labelled their hut the “American” hut shows the reader that the characters are attempting to attach themselves to a “place”, be it a real or constructed one. This creates within the camp a series of microcosms and cultural divides among the men. Peter Marlowe and the King, however, oppose these cultural divides by forming a homosocial friendship which breaks the barriers of nationality and rank, showing that, according to Clavell and his experiences, in settings in which “home” is unstable for the male characters, this aspect becomes unimportant when considering emotional survival. I suggest that the Japanese captors in *King Rat* add to the prisoners’ inability to connect to “place” or to have a feeling of “belonging”, as the captors’ treatment of the soldiers is appalling and emasculating, as one can see when Peter Marlowe describes his capture to the King, saying that the Japanese characters “cut off our hair and forbade us to wear officer’s insignia”.

Eventually they “allowed us” to “become” officers again” (71); one must note here the fact that the captured men were “*allowed*” to become officers again, as the word “*allowed*” implies that the prisoners of war had no control over their identity because they were being held in a place which was not their “home country”, a place which was “not home”, thus disabling their capacity to attribute an identity or rank to themselves. The Japanese guards view the soldiers as being of a lower class to themselves because the Western soldiers refused to fight or commit *seppuku* when captured; this action opposes the Japanese Bushido military ethic which I mentioned in my chapter regarding *King Rat*, and it is this “cowardice” (in the eyes of the Japanese characters, as portrayed by Clavell) which causes the prisoners of war to be regarded as “lower class”. One could also attribute the superiority portrayed by Clavell’s Japanese guards as coming from the fact that they are in their own “home country”, and thus feel confident as they are able to assert their identity and power over those who find themselves in a strange, brutal land, echoing Connell’s hegemonic masculinity theory of the power over the “weak”.

Hegemonic masculinity and patriarchy could be seen as two theories which have similar aspects. Patriarchy is defined as both: “a social organisation marked by the supremacy of the father in the clan or family, the legal dependence of wives and children, and the reckoning of descent and inheritance in the male line” and “a society or institution organized according to the principles or practices of patriarchy” (*Merriam-Webster online dictionary*, n.d.). Patriarchy can be seen in all three novels, in the military in both Afrika’s and Clavell’s works, as the military is a patriarchal organisation and in McCarthy’s work as it focuses on the “rule” of a father over his son; however, this “rule” is not a wholly negative one, as discussed in the previous chapter concerning *The Road*. The “rule” of the father figure is seen in all three novels, as it is the father figure in each one which influences the protagonists. In *Bitter Eden*, the father of Thomas is portrayed as a negative, abusive figure who sexually abused the young Thomas and whose mistreatment of his son has stayed with the character throughout his life, as can be seen in the incident where Danny comments that Thomas has been speaking in his sleep about something his father has done to him, and something which Danny himself has experienced. Thomas and Danny discuss the issue further, after having watched a play in which a male character portraying a female is “raped” by another male character; Thomas observes that neither he nor Danny should be shocked by the scene as both men “had it done” to them as boys (Afrika, 2002: 197). This portrayal of a father figure is one which is in opposition to idealised view of fathers being the providers of a “safe” shelter, as it

is obvious that Thomas's father did not provide him with safety but rather with pain and suffering. One could construe that it was this sexual abuse which has caused Thomas to be homophobic, both externally and internally, as in his mind, being a same-sex attracted man would liken him to his father. One should observe an incident when Thomas visits Danny at his home while he [Thomas] is waiting to return home to South Africa. Danny is shown to be wearing his father's robe when Thomas arrives. The reader may find this strange, as Danny is portrayed as having been abused by his father, but upon deeper inspection, one could see Danny's wearing of the robe which belonged to his abusive father as a manner in which to comfort his mother, whom one could see as being in denial. This denial depicted by Danny's mother, about Danny's father, can be seen in this exchange between her and Thomas:

"I nearly didn't recognise him in that dressing gown," I try to joke as we wait. "It's a far cry from the camps!" "It was his father's. He's very fond of it" [...] He has, I suppose, told you about his wife?" [...] "Yes, he has. And about his father, too, if it comes to that" [...] She seems to catch it because she snaps right back, "Well, there's nothing to say about his father except that he's dead". (Afrika, 2002: 221-2)

Danny's mother here is continuing with the "rule" of Danny's father even in the man's death, as she seemingly refuses to admit that he has abused his son, and later in the afore-mentioned conversation goes on to blame Danny's wife's actions for Danny's same-sex persuasion. I argue that this attitude could be seen as common in the World War II era, as a father was considered as the "head of the house-hold" and the provider for his family and thus his actions (both good and bad) were excused as he was the patriarch and had control over his wife and children.

With regard to how a father can influence his son, one must look to the father-and-son relationship seen in *King Rat*. Peter Marlowe's father and grandfather were both military careerists, and his father has instilled in him the ideals of "integrity, honour, duty, service and of keeping a stiff upper lip" (MacDonald, 1996: 48) and one can see that Peter Marlowe still aims to uphold these, despite being kept in conditions which are not conducive to many of these ideals, as stated previously. Marlowe believes, because of his father's stories of military life and honour, that a "proper Englishman" should be "proud to be killed for the flag" (Clavell, , 1975: 134). This father figure is more in keeping with the archetype of a patriarchal father, as one can clearly see his "rule" over Peter Marlowe's identity

construction. Clavell portrays Marlowe as eventually disregarding the ideals of “integrity, honour, duty, service and of keeping a stiff upper lip” (MacDonald, 1996: 48) in favour of survival and friendship.

The most prominent father-and-son relationship in all three novels can be seen in *The Road*. It is a novel which explores the relationship dynamics between a father and son during the post-apocalypse, when this bond may be tested by the harsh surroundings. The father in McCarthy’s novel is a “lone father”, classified by O’Brien as a “man who has sole care over his child without interaction from the mother figure” (1982: 184), and it is this “lone fatherhood” which sets the character apart from the hegemonic and patriarchal norms as he both protects *and* nurtures his son, taking on the dual role of father and mother figure. One can see, however, that his need to protect his son becomes oppressive over the course of the novel, as he minimises contact with all those who are outsiders to his and his son’s circle; this causes the son to long for others and to become “socially desperate” (Sottosanti, 2011: 5). The father in *The Road* attempts to create for his son a world which is unfamiliar to the boy but which is nostalgic for the father, as he recounts a memory of going searching for firewood with his uncle; it appears that it was a day spent in silence: “He sat in the back of the rowboat while his uncle bent to the oars [...] Neither of them had spoken a word. This was the perfect day of his childhood. This was the day to shape the days upon” (McCarthy, 12-13), as mentioned earlier. The final line of this memory shows the reader that McCarthy’s father character wishes to emulate his “perfect day” with his son, despite the fact that this activity is no longer viable in the barren world in which they now live. The father instils in his son his own ideals, creating a way of life for his son, as Zibrak postulates that the “only culture the boy has ever known is the one that has been constructed for him by the man” (2012: 106). One could see that, while the father in *The Road* does subvert hegemonically masculine norms, he is in fact creating for his son an androcentric and heteronormative culture (107).

The common subject of the exclusion of positive female characters in two of the novels can be related to the representation of fatherhood, with *King Rat* being the only novel providing a positive portrayal of female characters. *Bitter Eden* makes very little mention of women, and all instances are negative. Thomas’s wife Carina is the first female character the reader is introduced to, and she is described as “unsettlingly male” (Afrika, 2002: 2), and not

particularly attractive to the protagonist. He questions whether he truly “loves” his wife and is uncertain, as “love” is a word which “frightens” him (2). One can see from this very first mention of a female character that Thomas does not have a very high regard for women. The second portrayal of a female character is that of a “whore” (a prostitute) whom Thomas visits after he is liberated from the camp, and he compares her to his own mother (216), simultaneously offending both the prostitute and his own mother, with no qualms visible to the reader. I maintain that the most negative portrayal of a female character is that of Danny’s wife, as she is considered by Thomas to be “concerned only with herself”, after he has read a letter from her to Danny, which he finds to be full of “crudely sloppy sentiment” (117). Later, Danny’s mother writes to him telling him that his wife has absconded with another man and is carrying this other man’s child, and Stobie argues that this betrayal could be seen as a microcosmic representation of the betrayal the soldiers have felt at the hands of their “mother country”; the “mother country” has “betrayed and deserted” her men by sending them to a war in another country, and Danny’s wife has deserted and betrayed him by having a child by another man (2005: 207). Thomas’s mother, too, is represented in a negative manner. She is mentioned in a flashback Thomas experiences during the afore-mentioned play, and Thomas recalls that, instead of simply leaving her paedophilic husband, she attempts to understand his urges (Afrika, 2002: 197); one could see this action by his mother as the catalyst for the feelings Thomas has toward women, as according to Afrika’s portrayal, the very woman who he believed was supposed to protect him from such abuse did nothing to help her young son.

*King Rat* offers to the reader a cultural portrayal of women, namely Asian and Western women. The depiction of Western women by Clavell is negative in comparison to that of the Asian women in the novel, and this negativity toward Western women is seen in the portrayal of Grey’s wife, Trina. Grey’s thoughts of her begin unenthusiastically, as he pictures them “cooking all day” and “making love” (Clavell, 1975: 104), but he asserts later the sentiment that they will instead be “making pain” as Trina is portrayed as having very little interest in sexual intercourse, complaining of phantom headaches and tiredness, and scolding her husband for his physical attention toward her (104). It is later mentioned by Grey that she was not a virgin on their wedding night; this fact does not bother him but Trina’s lie about her “virginity” does, as he feels that her aversion to the act is simply used to manipulate and emasculate him, as one can see from previous quotations. The portrayal of Asian women in *King Rat* is vastly different from this, as they are shown by Clavell as having a “matter-of-fact” attitude toward sexual intercourse (MacDonald, 1996: 40). Peter Marlowe has fond

memories of his experience with a young Javanese girl, N'ai, in the village which he took refuge in. N'ai is a girl of an age which would be considered too young to engage in sexual experience by Western standards. Clavell's representation of the Asian attitude toward sexual intercourse shows that at a young age, girls are taught about healthy sexual relationships so as to prepare them for marriage. Another instance of this mind-set towards sexual relationships can be seen in that of the King and Kasseh, a woman who was a "gift" from the headman to the American for bringing him trade. One could see this "gifting" of Kasseh to the King as patriarchal and archaic, but Clavell does not portray her as having any resentment toward the King, and in fact she is shown as enjoying his company, as one can see from the earlier mentioned quotation that, when she and the King "lie down, there is not so much difference, no?" (Clavell, 1975: 154) Her attitude toward her own femininity is shown in the lines "And not ashamed of being a woman" (154). One can see that she is shown as regarding herself as an equal to the King, in relation to their sexual encounters, and this is an obvious difference from the manner in which Trina views her relationship with Grey.

The near complete elimination of female characters in *The Road* could be seen as directly linked to the focal theme of the father-and-son relationship of the novel. McCarthy's mother character is shown as deserting her husband and son, rather than remaining to care for her son as is expected of her, thus challenging the gender roles that society has created for men and women. She commits suicide and her choice is depicted as being pragmatic, as she says to the father, "They are going to rape us and kill us and eat us and you wont face it" (McCarthy, 2006: 56). Her words are prophetic, as the father-and-son pair come across instances which show that women and children have been used as sexual objects and food by the other cannibalistic survivors of the post-apocalypse, as one can see in the earlier mentioned scene involving a "phalanx" of slaves, pregnant women and "illclothed" young boys (McCarthy, 2006: 96).

Here one can see that the women and young boys have been used as "things" by the cannibals, who one can deduce are obviously men, judging from the fact that some of the women are pregnant. In a chilling scene, the father and son discover a foetus which is cooking on a fire, clearly alluding to the fact that the pregnant women are being used both for sexual intercourse *and* as providers of food. This shows the reader that female characters are simply regarded as objects by the male characters, and their negative portrayal could be seen as hingeing on the mother character's choice to "abandon" her family. Hirt argues that this

mother character can be compared to that of the biblical character Eve. The mother in *The Road* is blamed by the father (and, perhaps, McCarthy) for their miserable, bleak existence, just as Eve is blamed by Christianity and Judaism for her and Adam's eviction from the Garden of Eden (Hirt, 2011: 6). The definition of "apocalypse", as given by Hirt earlier, links these two female characters, as Hirt asserts that "apocalypse" can be defined as being "a disaster resulting in drastic, irreversible damage" (6). Hirt also hypothesises that Eve's actions brought about the "first apocalypse" and she is thus blamed for the plight of society thereafter (6), as I have established in my earlier argument in the chapter covering *The Road*. McCarthy continues on this aspect of "blame", and places blame upon his mother character for the situation of the father and son. A second "mother figure" is mentioned in the novel but her time is short and, as Zibrak postulates, she is merely a "third party to the encouragement and continuation of the man's myth" (Zibrak, 2011: 123), as quoted previously. As a *mother* figure, this character is positive and redeeming, in that she shows nurturing and kindness toward the boy, as she puts her arms around him, holds him and demonstrates genuine gladness to see the young boy safe (McCarthy, 2006: 306). I posit, however, that as a *female* character she is a negative portrayal and is included by McCarthy to continue the "man's myth" (Zibrak, 2011: 123), and to maintain the heteronormative culture structure which the father has formed for his son. My argument, as stated in the chapter regarding *The Road*, is that McCarthy has chosen a masculine survivalist setting in order to illustrate the fact that a man's journey cannot be undertaken in the presence of women, in order for it to be successful.

From reading my chapters, one can deduce that there are many types of masculinity available for men, and that hegemonic masculinity is not the only choice presented to authors of literature set in times of intense crisis. *Bitter Eden* offers the reader characters who ascribe, eventually, to subordinate masculinity, which is defined as "men who are completely opposite to the ideals of hegemonic masculinity; they are effeminate, expressive and are sometimes homosexual" (Connell, 2009: 50), as seen most clearly in the character of Douglas, but also in the character of Danny. I believe that Thomas, the protagonist, offers the reader an insight into Afrika's confusion toward his own ambiguous sexuality, as Thomas begins the novel as portraying a character who has chosen to follow complicit masculinity, but who feels as if he is in fact a subordinately masculine male, however reluctantly. Complicit masculinity can be seen in "men who usually do not fit the characteristics of hegemonic masculinity but do not question or oppose this form of masculinity" (50).

Clavell's novel *King Rat* represents homosocial masculinity, as the main protagonists choose a friendship which consists of "many parts, including the camaraderie, fellowship, and intimacy often celebrated in male culture" (Kimmel, 1996: 8). It is the bond between Peter Marlowe and the King which subverts the monolithic, hegemonic ideals of the military and of the society of the setting of the novel, as the men's friendship continues despite their background and rank. Marginalised masculinity can be seen in the father in *The Road*, as he is "outside" of the masculinity illustrated throughout the novel, yet still ascribes to the ideals of hegemonic masculinity in the form of attempting to maintain some physical strength and showing aggression toward those who wish to harm him. The son in McCarthy's novel does not display these same characteristics and offers the reader a form of subordinate masculinity, in that he is more emotionally expressive than his father. Each novel has an aspect of hegemonic masculinity but, as one can see, each author attempts to oppose those ideals by offering male characters who do not conform to what one expects of male protagonists in such settings.

I chose this topic for my dissertation as the portrayal of male characters in novels has been of particular interest to me throughout my life as a reader, and alternative fiction (such as narratives set in times of war or post-apocalyptic futures) has been a preferred genre of mine. I did not take a feminist viewpoint when discussing the novels, as I perceived that a feminist perspective was not applicable to my chosen texts as each one centres on male protagonists and their ideals of masculinity, and a *male* character's reaction to a less-than-ideal setting. On a more personal level, I believe the Masculinities Studies has lost importance with regard to Gender Studies (in the context of this dissertation, the study of literature in Gender Studies) as I assent in my introduction with Kimmel's estimation that "the popular mindset still correlates the word 'gender' with 'women'" (Kimmel, 2001: 1). I concur with this opinion and argue that while this could be seen as a justified "popular mindset", as it could be seen that it was women who created a way for gender to become "visible as a category of analysis", it is one which tends to make men "invisible" in Gender Studies (1). This dissertation hopefully will add to the spectrum of Men's Studies, as I believe that the fact that I am a woman who has chosen *not* to view *Bitter Eden*, *King Rat* and *The Road* from a feminist standpoint is a fresh take on the three texts.

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