CHAPTER ONE

The Concept of Masculinity

The area of literary masculinity studies in general - and Victorian masculinity studies in particular - has come into its own zenith in the past twenty to thirty years. While it would not be accurate to say that masculinity studies have gained equal footing in studies on gender issues, the inclusion of examinations of masculinity in international conferences does bode well for its eventual acceptance as a full component of what is called —gender studies. Not only will the rest of this chapter function as an overview of scholarship done on the concept of masculinity, but it also serves to introduce this dissertation’s contribution to this field. It is exciting to think of how many other possibilities exist to analyse how masculinities were constructed, contested, or disrupted during the Victorian period. The progress of Victorian masculinity studies, as with the development of any field, is not a simple straight path, but one with many wide-ranging, divergent, sometimes contradictory, and occasionally far afield contributions.

There is a noticeable growing interest in the study of men and masculinities. This can be noticed by the emergence of masculinity and men’s studies as legitimate areas of study in the social sciences (e.g. Connell, 1995; M. Kimmel, 1987; Morgan, 1992; Seidler, 1989).¹ The interest has extended to academic publications on men (e.g. the Journal of Men and Masculinities) which have included contributions from sociology, anthropology, psychology, and the psychotherapy literature. The current interest in masculinity has not arisen by chance; there is a social and political background to the emergence of men’s studies. The modern study of men and masculinity owes much to the academic and social advances brought about by feminism and feminist writers². The modern study of men and masculinities has arisen through a growing recognition in the social sciences of the importance of gender and gender relations (e.g. Connell, 1987, 2002).

Historians and anthropologists have shown that there is no one pattern of masculinity that is found everywhere. Different cultures, and different periods of history, construct masculinity differently. There is no single version of masculinity that is found everywhere. Constructing masculinity differ from one culture to another and from one historical moment to another. Further, multiple masculinities are found even within one culture or organization. Masculinity in the West is not the same as that of the East. Homosexuality can be considered a kind of masculinity in America, France or England, whereas in Arab
countries it can be considered as a matter destroying masculinity. In this sense masculinity can be seen from the point of view of each society independently. What can be viewed as masculine might not be seen as masculine by others.

R.W. Connell argues that there is no one uniform conception of masculinity that can be traced throughout history and through every culture, religion, race, and social class. Instead there are multiple masculinities that result from different cultures having attempted to define gender for different purposes. It is even inadequate to assume that each community defines masculinity uniformly, but rather we find that there is a diversity of gender identities within each specific community. So, it is difficult to have one version of masculinity. She adds:

Knowledge about masculinities has developed very rapidly over the past two decades and the accomplishments of researchers in the field are considerable, with new methods, new topics and investigation and new groups being studied. The matter of specificity of different masculinities needs closer consideration in this dissertation. Marchand, et al argues that to realise masculinities on a world scale it is crucial to comprehend the global associations involved. Marchand further clarifies that “Large-scale social processes – global market relations, migration and ethnic/cultural conflict - are increasingly important for understanding gender issues in general”

Historians have been at the forefront of scholarly interest in men and masculinities, often developing innovative ways of bringing theoretical analysis to bear on contextual developments. As the discipline itself, is often said to be on both sides of the division between the humanities and social sciences, historians who engage with masculinities do so from a wide range of perspectives on the tension between materialist and post-structuralism perspectives. There is some display of a greater attachment to ‘patriarchy’ and embrace the concept of hegemonic masculinity, which will be further critically examined in this chapter.

Materialist perspectives are especially evident in the early histories of masculinity, which emerged as the claims of male liberationists started to be aired and the women’s movement began its slow alteration of social life. In the 1970s, Natalie Davis famously urged women’s historians to “be interested in the history of both women and men,” claiming “that we should not be working only on the subjected sex any more than a historian of class can focus exclusively on peasants.” Yet this invitation was largely ignored as “gender” continued to function as a synonymous word for women. In the late time of 1970s, Joseph Pleck was critiquing the sex role theory because of its inability to account for power.
Beginning in the early 1980s, the Australian masculinist, R. W. Connell developed a way of theorizing diversity among masculinity that went beyond sex role theory while remaining firmly connected to the concept of patriarchy. Peter N. Stearns, a social historian, published a book called ‘Be a Man! Males in Modern Society’. Stearns worked with existing social histories to sketch changing masculine ideals in Europe and North America since the industrial revolution. Arguing that gender is “a valid, though not exclusive, means of social analysis,” Stearns traced the contemporary crisis of masculinity to long-term social structures associated with the broad process of change associated with industrialization and the rise of cities, and the development of modern society and a modernized outlook from the late eighteenth century to the present. After describing the general challenges that industrialization posed to traditional forms of masculinity, Stearns outlined broad categories of men who, despite hailing from different national cultures, shared certain general characteristics. This formation of sociological ideal types provided an important starting point for more focused studies, which is precisely what Stearns had hoped to accomplish.

In the early 1990s, E. Anthony Rotundo argued that in the United States, traditional communal forms of manhood were overshadowed in the early nineteenth century by a new emphasis on the “self-made man”, a bourgeois model that was extended and confronted around 1900 by a more aggressive passionate manhood. Rotundo’s basic typology was extended in Michael Kimmel’s *Manhood in America: A Cultural History*. Kimmel, the sociologist, employs the notion of hegemonic masculinity for political as well as methodological reasons. Like John Tosh, who is known for similarly pioneering work on the history of British masculinities, Kimmel maintains that the concept allows scholars to remain firmly connected to the feminist critique of patriarchy.

Joan Wallach Scott (1986) called upon historians to be attentive to show how the language of sexual difference subtly structured a wide range of concepts, relationships, and institutions. By offering a range of new methods and objects of historical study as well as a more sophisticated approach to power, Scott extended the reach of the feminist critique beyond the descriptions of patriarchal oppression and the unearthing of female historical actors that characterized much of women’s history. While not universally appreciated by feminist historians, many of whom felt that a focus on gender distracted attention from the oppression of women, Scott’s intervention helped pave the way for more fluid historical analyses of masculinity.
The impulse to treat male behaviour and ideals as tied to shifting historical contexts encouraged historians to map masculinities according to distinct periods. Among historians of American masculinities the first extended meeting of social history and post-structuralism took place in Gail Bederman’s *Manliness & Civilization*, which combined an analysis of the discursive intersection of gender and race with an interest in defining masculinities according to different periods. Bederman shows how in America the term ‘masculinity’ only came into currency around 1900, partly as a reaction against the largely moral connotations of the Victorian notion of ‘manliness’, gentility, and religiosity. If in the early 1800s ‘masculine’ was at best a relatively empty, fluid adjective that generically differentiated men from women. By the 1930s, ‘masculinity’ had developed into the mix of ‘masculine’ ideals more familiar to twentieth-century Americans ideals. Thus, if the concept of ‘manliness’ defined as more genteel, polite, and religious ways of being a man, “masculinity” expressed a more modern fascination with aggression, sexuality, and primitivism ideally shared by all males in the twentieth century.

In *A Man’s Place*, the historian John Tosh makes broadly similar claims about manhood in Britain, where an early nineteenth-century discourse that sought to define men as breadwinning heads of the household was eventually eclipsed by an attraction with adventure culminating in a “flight from domesticity”. Tosh claims that ‘masculinity’ only emerged as a popular term in Britain in the 1970s. Indeed, Tosh accords the concept of ‘manliness’ greater latitude than Bederman, observing that in addition to “godliness and good manners”, it also had “bodily associations” including physical robustness, self-defence and readiness for combat, as well as physical bearing and sexual potency. It could even imply participation in boxing and duelling, which, though most often practiced by proletarians and - in the eighteenth century- aristocrats were also described as ‘manly’.

Men have been being studied for a long time, and historically there have been three general models that have governed social scientific research on men and masculinity. Firstly, biological models, in which researchers have focused on the ways in which the biological differences between males and females determine different social behaviour. These models have been critiqued for being overly reductionist and for failing to adequately consider the impact of other. Secondly, anthropological models, in which masculinity has been looked at cross-culturally, stressing the variations and similarities in the behaviour associated with being a man. However, some anthropological models of masculinity and sex differences have been criticized for overgeneralising the naturalness of male roles and
underestimating the role of culture. Thirdly, sociological sex role models which have stressed the importance of the socialization of boys and girls into sex roles specific to biological sex. Sex role models have been influenced by psychoanalysis e.g. Freud and psychological models, both of which have contributed to the discussion of gender role identities, in an attempt to map the expected sequence of development for males or females to learn appropriate sex roles.

Sex role models have been pervasive in psychology and are seen as the collection of ideas, attitudes and attributes that are seen as appropriate for males and females. For example, for males these characteristics include strength, aggression, technical knowledge and a dominant cognitive mode, whereas apt female characteristics include the demonstration of caring, passivity, cooperation and a dominant emotional mode. Sex role identity models have been extensively critiqued by Pleck, (1995). Furthermore, feminist critiques of psychoanalysis (e.g. Chodorow, 1978) have challenged the idea of a ‘natural’ gender order and other writers have argued for the acknowledgement of the social construction of masculinity in psychoanalytic theorizing. To put it simply, despite many years of research on men, it has only been in the last thirty years that attention has shifted to the study of masculinity and men as gendered beings, and thus to the study of men as ‘men’.

The social constructionist theory to masculinity grew out of the recognition that how men behave as men is culturally and historically defined, “being a man or a woman, then, is not a fixed state. It is a becoming, a condition actively under construction”. Men are believed to be active agents in the gender construction process not passive recipients of an all-powerful gender socialization system. Addis and Cohane describe the social construction of gender:

Thus, the emphasis shifts from a view of individuals as respondents to processes of reinforcement and punishment (i.e. social learning) to a view of individuals as active agents who construct particular meanings of masculinity in particular social contexts. The process of gender construction is not stationary; it continues and develops. Constructions of masculinity are revealed though actions and behaviour, thus masculinity may be defined as ‘what men do’ rather than ‘who men are’. In the social construction theory, an attempt is made to understand this complex process across different cultures and contexts and with different groups of men, young or old and acknowledge differences of social power between different masculinities. The social constructionist perspective
studying masculinity places the focus on the processes of construction. Of interest, the underlying structures and forces are to create and define different masculinities. Thus, masculinity may be defined as the way in which the male gender is constructed in social interaction. For example, M. Kimmel (1989) defined gender as the complex set of social meanings that are attached to biological sex, and the way in which they are enacted:

We believe that men are also ‘gendered’, and that this gendering processes the transformation of biological males into socially interacting men, is a central experience for men.\textsuperscript{18}

Masculinity, like many other terms, is difficult to be defined. It is a controversial concept. This is because masculinity is a product of different factors like culture, society, history, and the geographical location. It is not a standardized container, fixed by biology. In his book, \textit{Masculinities and Culture}, John Beynon argues that when we link masculinity to culture, it immediately becomes evident that in terms of enactment masculinity is a diverse, mobile even unstable construction. He emphasizes that whenever masculinity appears it should not be read as implying uniformity but on the contrary, variety and fragmentation\textsuperscript{19}.

The term masculinity refers to men’s traditional manners, habits and attitudes, which constitute the patriarchal system of order in society. The literary critic Judith Kegan Gardiner argues that it governs the relationship between men, from one side and between men and women in society from another side, where women in general are subordinated to men.\textsuperscript{20}

The term masculinity is the key icon of many of the recent works on men and gender. Masculinity is used in a wide variety of the ways and as shorthand for a diverse range of social phenomena.\textsuperscript{21} This is not necessary a problem, as many terms in academic studies are figured differently depending on the theoretical frameworks in which they are located.

Psychology, anthropology, history, and sociology provide a complex view about masculinity as a set of definable and measurable actions and attitudes, as innate qualities embedded in the psyche, and more recently as a complex set of behaviour with different meanings culturally and historically and regulated by interactions with other men, women, and power structures in society. Given these diverse accounts, it is unsurprising that there is no widely accepted definition of masculinity that helps to clarify its application in society.
Till the second half of the twentieth century, masculinity was defined as the socially accepted way of being a man. All writers in the late three decades agree that masculinity is socially and historically not biologically constructed. Some writers, like Morgan (1992), assert that masculinity is about what men and women do or behave. Morgan finds that masculinity is a “cultural space”⁵². He argues that “the masculine and feminine” signify a range of culturally defined characteristics assignable to both men and women. Masculinity and femininity, as characteristics of men and women, exist only as socio-cultural constructions and not as the property of persons. Indeed, they are no more than a set of assumptions which people hold about each other and themselves in certain contexts.

John MacInnes defines masculinity in his book *The End of Masculinity* as:

> Gender, together with the terms of masculinity and femininity, is an ideology people use in modern societies to imagine the existence of differences between men and women on the basis of their sex where, in fact, there is none . . . [it is something] we imagine to exist and which is represented to us in material form through the existences of the two sexes, male and female.²³

Sociologists Stephen Whitehead and Frank Barrett have employed a similar definition in their introductory chapter to *The Masculinities Reader*, (2001). “Masculinities”, they wrote, “are those behaviours, languages and practices, existing in specific cultural and organizational locations, which are commonly associated with males and thus culturally defined as not feminine”²⁴. They continue that Masculinity is not a static concept but an ongoing process that is constructed in interaction and it is more accurate to speak of a plurality of masculinities.

According to Connell (1995), gender can be defined as the ways in which the “reproductive arena”, which includes “bodily structures and processes of human reproduction”, organizes practice at all levels of social organization from identities, to symbolic rituals, to large-scale institutions. As a central feature of gender relations, Connell defines masculinity as:

> “... simultaneously a place in gender relations, the practices through which men and women engage that place in gender, and the effects of these practices on bodily experience, personality and culture”²⁵.

This definition offered by Connell, though complex, is suggestive. It warns us that masculinity is not the property of men, and reminds us to be wary of using the terms ‘men’, ‘male’ and ‘masculinity’ interchangeably. Discourses of masculinity are available to be imposed upon both men and women. In this definition, Connell claims that masculinity has three components. Firstly, the social component in which the individuals can come across
via practice. Secondly, gender relations component that enable both men and women to understand what the masculine is. Thirdly, the effects of these gender relations on the social domain. Masculinity is neither biologically determined nor automatically ascribed to all men (Morrell 2006). Instead, masculinities are “configurations of practice”, meaning that men enact masculinity based on shared understandings of how “real men” behave (Connell 1995). Masculinity is something that is continuously performed through actions and interactions with others, and is learned through those interactions (Connell, 2005).

Definitions of what it means to be a successful man are socially and historically constructed, and they evolve based on changing material circumstances and gender systems. In Manliness and Civilization, Gail Bederman delineates the difference in meaning among ‘manhood’, ‘manliness’, and ‘masculinity’. Bederman observes that the difficulty in demarcating these terms; first of all, the definition of ‘manhood’ has varied according to time, place, and context. In addition, ‘manhood’ remains an ambiguous and frequently misunderstood concept in that it subsumes disparate assumptions about its meaning. In her book, Bederman traces out the history of ‘manliness’ and ‘masculinity’ to the turn of the century. She indicates that in the late 19th century, ‘manliness’ connoted a moral dimension. In other words, it denoted “character or conduct worthy of a man, [comprising] all the worthy, moral attributes which the Victorian middle class admired in a man […] for example, sexual self-restraint, a powerful will, a strong character”26. On the other hand, ‘masculinity’ was devoid of moral or emotional meaning. It was used to refer to any characteristics that all men had, and consequently, “‘masculine,’ more frequently than ‘manly,’ was applied across class or racial boundaries”27. By definition, all men were masculine although all may not have been necessarily manly. However, Bederman suggests that as the shift from ‘manliness’ to ‘masculinity’ took place; the definition of the latter began to evolve in order to encompass new connotations. By mid-twentieth century, she adds: “masculinity had developed into the mix of ‘masculine’ ideals more familiar to twentieth-century Americans – ideals like aggressiveness, physical force, and male sexuality”.28 Thus, the transition from ‘manliness’ to ‘masculinity’ was that from an ‘essence’ to a ‘performance’ of manhood. Notwithstanding the different undertones of each term; ‘manhood’, ‘manliness’ and ‘masculinity’ are still used as interchangeable terms and their meanings are still fused and used synonymously in masculinity studies.
John Tosh comments on the concept of masculinity of nineteenth-century Britain that “manliness was only secondarily about men’s relations with women”. “The dominant code of Victorian manliness”, he adds “with its emphasis on self-control, hard work and independence, was that of the professional and business classes and manly behaviour was what (among other things) established a man’s class credentials vis-á-vis his peers and his subordinates”.29

Masculinity is very often institutionally defined in relation to its supposed opposite, femininity. Arthur Brittan reminds us of the very important notion that masculinity…does not exist in isolation from femininity and vice versa30. In other words, a community collectively defines masculinities, but these definitions are sustained in institutions, often relatively in direct comparison to their opposite. These definitions of masculinity are created and sustained at least partly through literature, and specifically through novels.

Masculinities are not just about men; women perform and produce the meaning and practices of the masculine as well. But masculinities are always about the differences from the feminine, differences in power between men and women in the many societies in which the ‘female’ gender is positioned in subordinate position to the ‘male’.

Masculinity is not only the product of men. Also, it is not possible to locate the ways in which both masculinity and femininity exist. So, it is better to use the term ‘gender’ because it matters indicating the social hierarchy in which men dominate and subordinate women. However, gender cannot be seen without paying attention to the gender roles inside the family. This is because masculinity is basically structured within the family especially in intimate relations. These relations affect the gender roles of boys behaving like adults inside the family life. Moreover, masculinity of boys is developed through the male peer relations. Women’s perception of masculinity contribute to the construction of masculinity as well.

Masculinity has been classified differently depending upon the approach of the researcher. Joanna Bourke outlines the five ways masculinity31 can be conceptualized, including biological, whereby masculinity is a product of the biological makeup of men; socialization, where masculinity is a result of the “proper” socialization of men; psychoanalytical, whereby differing masculinities are formed as a result of varying socio-historical and cultural environments; discourse, where masculinity is an outcome of
discourses; and *feminism*, where patriarchy not only restricts men but also reinforces the oppression of women.

There are multiple versions of masculinity within any ‘one’ social context. Robert Morrell explains, “Boys and men choose how to behave and this choice is made from a number of available repertoires. Such choices are never entirely free, because the available repertoires differ from context to context and because the resources from which masculinity is constructed are unevenly distributed”.

Thus, men in different social positions have different resources available to them for the successful demonstration of their manhood and the successful construction of a masculine identity. Further, men wield and access power in different ways, depending on their status in other domains, such as class. Some men can use economic resources to demonstrate social power and masculine achievement, whereas men of limited economic means do not have that option.

There are many different kinds of masculinities studied by researchers, but the most notable one is Hegemonic masculinity. Hegemonic masculinity is sometimes used as a free floating concept, in contrast to the original concept given by R.W. Connell. This concept is firmly attached to the peak of the ladder of historically specific kind of masculinities which include subordinate and inferior masculinities. Hegemonic masculinity was not supposed to be normal to some extent; only few men practise it. But it was certainly normative. It embodied the currently most honoured way of being a man, it required men mostly to be guided by it. Ideologically, it legalized the global dominance of men over women. Hegemonic masculinity took place in certain conditions which were open to such a change. Hegemonic masculinity replaced older types of masculinity and became the prominent form of masculinity during the Victorian era.

Hegemonic masculinity is clearly the most popular and influential type of masculinities. It is related to the control of others in society. This is because hegemonic men find hegemonic masculinity significant for them to maintain authority over women and subordinated men.

Hegemonic masculinity proposes that society consents to masculinity as dominant and superior to femininity suggesting that men have rights to certain positions and roles in society, which inherently disadvantages women. R. W. Connell defines Hegemonic masculinity as:
the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of legitimacy of patriarchy which guarantees (or is taken guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women.\textsuperscript{34}

Connell not only speaks of men in relation to women, but also of men in relation to other men. Connell implies that hegemonic masculinity generates dominance over women as well as more ‘marginalised masculinities’ of men. He maintains that in a hegemonic masculinity, men as a group are associated with defence, while women are associated with change. It is through change or action set in motion by women which allow women as a marginalised gender to dismantle the current hegemonic structure. Hegemonic masculinity proposes that society consents to masculinity as dominant and superior to femininity, suggesting that men have rights to certain positions and roles in society which inherently disadvantages women. R.W. Connell argues that there is no one uniform conception of masculinity that can be traced throughout history and through every culture, religion, race, and social class. Instead there are multiple masculinities that result from different cultures having attempted to define gender for different purposes. It is even inadequate to assume that each community defines masculinity uniformly, but rather we find that there is a diversity of gender identities within each specific community. James Eli Adams argues that all masculinities are dependent upon audience reception whether the performers admit this or not.\textsuperscript{35}

Connell also shows us that these various definitions create relations of hierarchy that place certain masculinities in a dominant position, while marginalizing others. These hegemonic masculinities, ―the most honoured or desired according to Connell, are not always the most common form of masculinity, and that most men of any given community are often in tension with their group’s hegemonic gender identity. Hegemonic masculinity has been briefly defined as a culturally idealized form of manliness. Still, it is a nuanced term that includes both a personal and a collective project, and is the common sense about breadwinning and manhood. It is exclusive, anxiety-provoking, internally and hierarchically distinguished, ruthless and vicious.

Connell’s conceptualization of hegemonic masculinity was the first to recognise the existence of various, often competing, male groups representing diverse ideas of what it means to be masculine. Connell asserts that hegemonic masculinity, in contrast to sex role theory, acknowledges that the key concepts of power and change are central in understanding relationships both between and within genders. It is this fundamental idea —
that to identify fully the power relations that shape the legitimacy of patriarchy in modern Western society. It is crucial to study not only the dominance of men over women but also the dominance of hegemonic masculinities over other masculinities—that supports one of the most significant contributions to the study of the social construction of masculinity: that of Demetriou, (1991), who identified a substantial simplification in Connell’s theory of hegemonic masculinity. Returning to the origin of the term hegemony in the study of class hegemony, Demetriou suggests the existence of two separate forms: “internal hegemony”, that is to say, “hegemony over subordinated masculinities”; and “external hegemony”, in other words, “hegemony over women”.

Michael Kimmel argues that “hegemonic masculinity is always constructed in relations to various subordinated masculinities as well as in relation to women”. Kimmel has classified Hegemonic masculinity into three types: local, regional, and global; local as in family life, regional as in hegemonic masculinity in societies, global as in the world of politics.

Masculine hegemony refers to the culturally dominant form of masculinity that is constructed in relation to femininity and subordinate masculinities, such as homosexuality. Hegemonic masculinity is formed from the people’s common sense and influenced by media sources such as television, film, advertising sports and by different genres of literature like novels as in the case of our thesis. The perception should not be approached as something static and unchanging. In an ever-changing social structure, a social definition of masculinity is constantly being negotiated. Hegemony exists when people believe something and it becomes true in its consequences. Hegemonic relations only exist because they are believed to be true. Hegemony then becomes true in its consequences not only a conscious but also an unconscious process much of this underpinned by sexual relationships.

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7 Stearns, Peter N. Be a Man! Males in Modern Society. New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1979


18 Kimmel, 1989, p.4.


27 Ibid, p. 18.


38 By ‘literature’ here, I mean that Masculinity is studied and presented from the point of view of psychology, sociology, and anthropology and I hope to present it through a literary perspective in this thesis presented in the novels of Jane Austen and Charlotte Bronte, which I hope to be a novel attempt. Masculinity in the novels of such Victorian novelists may prove to be a novel attempt.