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FANTASY LITERATURE: RINGS IN TRANSLATION

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Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to explore masculinities and address issues regarding the “masculine ideal”, the shaping of, and silencing and impositions upon men’s identities, as well as the effort and anxiety that comes with one’s struggle to be “a good man”. While contemporary literary and cultural criticism has emphasised the importance of women and femininities over the years, only a relatively limited in size body of research has been dedicated to men and masculinities, leaving men’s identities largely unexplored.

With this analysis I examine the idea of masculinity at the present time—a time of prime globalisation—and use paradigms provided by the male characters in the fiction of four major authors, from the same generation but from four different areas in the anglophone ring (the U.S.A., Britain, Canada and Australia). In particular, the four works of fiction examined are: *American Psycho* by Bret Easton Ellis, *The Terrible Privacy of Maxwell Sim* by Jonathan Coe, *Self* by Yann Martel and *Barracuda* by Christos Tsiolkas. These texts portray different aspects of masculinity, all examined under the lens of the current globalisation, and the writings of significant thinkers of contemporary cultural theory such as Raewyn W. Connell, Michel Foucault, Judith Butler, Bill Brown, and other theorists from the area of humanist studies. Some notions introduced by the field of psychoanalysis have also been particularly important in the course of this study. The idea of masculinity in all four novels, and also in the body of the cultural theory used, seems to be underscored by, or even constituted upon, social relations and socially determined concepts imposed on men’s identities, but also the omnipresent “ghost” of patriarchy inherent in almost all understanding about masculinity. Thus, and if one considers globalisation as an umbrella that conditions all social relations and actions today, what this thesis examines is the hegemony imposed on men, or among men, and whether today’s globalisation as a milieu has made it more feasible to discuss different versions of masculinity, as well as the possibility of a more harmonious co-existence and dialogue among them.