
Volume 20

Issue 3 *Selected papers from the Fourth, World
Conference on Women's Studies, Colombo Sri Lanka*

Article 3

Mar-2019

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Recommended Citation

Fišerová, Petra (2019). Monster to Monster: Masculinity as an Invisible Major Theme in Hunter's Run. *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 20(3), 17-27.

Available at: <https://vc.bridgew.edu/jiws/vol20/iss3/3>

Monster to Monster: Masculinity as an Invisible Major Theme in *Hunter's Run*

By Petra Fišerová¹

Abstract

Taken for granted, normalized as a non-category, and thus invisible, masculinity is a topic that largely escaped public and much academic attention until the birth of men and masculinity studies. It is my belief that this discipline will play an important part in the future of gender studies, which is why my paper doubles as an appeal for more scholars to join me and learn more about this lesser known side of gender theory. In my analysis of *Hunter's Run* (2007), an American sci-fi novel for mature audiences authored by George R. R. Martin, Gardner Dozois, and Daniel Abraham, I use Connell's hierarchy of four masculinities and other research. I quickly reveal that the novel is filled to the brim with commentary on men and 'mankind,' so much so that the greatest plot point is when the protagonist confronts his harmful ideal of hegemonic masculinity and admits that he despises the toxic person it has made him. The message is a rather loud criticism of hegemonic standards that make men emotionally stunted, prone to violence, afraid of admitting any kind of weakness or dependency, and desperate to one-up and dominate women as well as other men (as observed by Brittan in 1989 and many others). As if that was not enough, the language of the novel overuses the word man in such striking ways it demanded a section of its own in this paper. Considering all my findings, it is shocking that neither the three authors, nor the publishers, or the reviewers seem to have noticed this major theme. Instead, they claim that *Hunter's Run* is a story about humanity and identity, even though only the male side of these concepts is ever discussed. This leads me to further explain invisible masculinity as it was conceptualized by Kimmel in 1993, and to announce the need for more masculinity research in the stories we consume.

Keywords: Masculinity studies, Invisible masculinity, Hegemonic masculinity, Marginalized masculinity, Toxic masculinity

Introduction

Masculinity is everywhere: it is the expected performance in business and politics, it is the mainstream tone in comedy, sci-fi and in fact most entertainment genres, and as I will show later, it is also often the presumed perspective in philosophical discourse of what it means to be human. In any society with a history of patriarchy, humanity's default setting, so to speak, is considered male; and because of this, not despite of this, masculinity is both ubiquitous and invisible.

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Michael Kimmel² explained the concept of invisible masculinity in 1993, writing: “Strange as it may sound, men are the ‘invisible’ gender. Ubiquitous in positions of power everywhere, men are invisible to themselves...As the Chinese proverb has it, the fish are the last to discover the ocean” (5). Kimmel allegedly discovered his ocean at a feminist seminar in the 1970s, during a discussion about the need for intersectionality, when a black woman asked a white woman what she saw when she looked in the mirror. The answer was ‘a woman’, to which the black woman responded: “I see a black woman. To me, race is visible every day, because race is how I am not privileged in our culture. Race is invisible to you, because it’s how you are privileged” (Ibid.). Kimmel, himself a middle-class white man, came to a startling revelation, because when he looked in the mirror, he saw a human being. That was the day he had “begun to understand that race, class, and gender do not refer only to people marginalized by race, class, or gender” (Ibid.). This explains why gender used to be discussed only in relation to women, as if femininity was the only gender around. In 1990, a historian made this remark: “Woman alone seems to have ‘gender’ since the category itself is defined as that aspect of social relations based on difference between the sexes in which the standard has always been man” (Lacquer 22).

Influenced by second-wave feminism, early systematic research on masculinity was conducted in North America in the mid-1970s (Flood viii), and after a wave of seminal research in the 1980s, the discipline was invigorated with a surge of publications in the 2000s. Yet by 2018, instead of having grown and found its rightful place in gender studies departments across the world, it is still a rather unknown academic approach. This, I think, is an unfortunate development because men’s and masculinity studies might be just the tool to achieve meaningful and sustainable change in areas where other feminist approaches remain unheard. By making masculinity visible, deconstructing its standards and ideals, and offering healthier alternatives to its performance, I believe that this discipline can play an important part in achieving social progress. When I heard that one of the themes of the 4th World Conference on Women’s Studies was going to be the future of Women’s Studies, I thought of no better place to begin sharing my research with the rest of the world. Since I was the only one representing masculinity studies at the conference, I was all the more glad for attending. In a world where outside the academia, masculinity as a socio-culturally constructed gender role is still mostly invisible, there is a lot of work to be done, and I invite my fellow scholars to join me.

In this paper, I apply said approach to *Hunter’s Run* (2007), a contemporary science fiction novel I am using as evidence that when humanity itself is so heavily normalized as male that masculinity does not even register as a gender category, an entire novel can be co-written by three authors over the span of 30 years, published, and then reviewed, with none of the writers, publishers or reviewers noticing that masculinity is its major theme. But first, it is time to prove that *Hunter’s Run’s* setting, protagonist psychology, storyline, and language itself revolve around masculinity.

² It should be noted that as far back as First Wave feminism in the United States, England and France, early feminists levied critiques on social constructions of manhood as witnessed in, for example, Elizabeth Cady Stanton’s 1848 Declaration of Sentiments in the United States and before that, in France, the Déclaration des droits de la femme et de la citoyenne (Declaration on the Rights of Women and Citizens). These seminal feminist documents took masculinity to task. Similarly, African American men critiqued notions of white masculinity in, for example, Frederick Douglass’s “The Color Line” published in the *North American Review* in 1881, a phrase harnessed again in W. E. B. Du Bois’ important book *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903) which also interrogated white masculinity. Throughout the colonized world, resistance to colonization in the writings of Franz Fanon and others proffered similarly significant critiques of white supremacy embodied in masculinity. However, masculinity as a systematic academic study wasn’t formalized till the rise of masculinity studies.”

A Story about Masculinity: The Setting, the Protagonist, and the Storyline

Hunter's Run is set in a world where the people of Earth had attempted to colonize the rest of the universe. These efforts are described in a way that closely parallels real histories of patriarchal colonization, using words such as conquest, dominance, and empire (Martin et al. 14-15). "It was generations ago that mankind had...taken to the stars with dreams of conquest. Humanity had planned to spread its seed through the universe like a high councilor's son at a port-town brothel" (14), narrates the protagonist, adding heavily masculinized imagery on top.

In this sci-fi world, the hubris of man was confronted by much more powerful alien races, who found appreciation for the human propensity to environmental self-destruction (15)—another patriarchal feature pointed out by ecofeminists. The people of Earth became colonizers after all when they were tasked with taming the wilderness of uncolonized planets in preparation for other races' industrial invasion. One of these planets is São Paulo where the story is set, with the protagonist playing an important in the colonization effort and indulging in the same bad habit as his forefathers. He works as a prospector who explores the jungle in search of minable resources, making money from destroying what gives him solace (35) as he mars natural beauty with explosives and sets up roads for other colonizers, even though he prefers to be the only one in the wilderness.

The protagonist, Ramón Espejo, is a morally gray character, as befits mature genre fiction featuring sex and violence; but in this case, his moral grayness is closely tied to his gender performance.

Chapter one introduces him just as he is murdering a stranger in drunken rage in what is supposed to be a mere fist fight. Rage is Ramón's favorite emotional response—he hails it as something that lifts you "up above everything—morality, fear, yourself" (30) and gives you "a sense of power and control" (55). He likes to bury himself in it when he hits rock bottom, claiming that "[i]n times of stress...Ramón's rage ha[s] never deserted him" (54).

Aside from his easily accessible anger, Ramón's emotional range is very limited. Whenever he feels or shows any emotion resembling weakness, such as fear (41), embarrassment (162), or pain (46), he quickly replaces them with rage; although sometimes, he takes an extra second to feel ashamed (46, 59, 64, 104) and humiliated (107) for said weakness before switching to anger. I have too many examples to show, but I will try to make do with one where Ramón notices that his nerves have made his voice sound a little weak:

Ramón forced himself to laugh, but it came out thin and tinny. He sounded like a coward. He stopped and spat instead, anger filling his breast. Maneck and that pale alien fuck in the hive had made a weakling of him. Just remembering the eaters-of-the-young was enough to make him squeak like a little girl! (175)

The excerpt shows the thought process that leads the male character to use rage as a defensive mechanism whenever he perceives weakness within himself, reaching for vulgarisms and misogynist language to correct his own behavior into what he considers properly masculine. Those who know what trappings hegemonic masculinity poses to the man's emotional well-being can already see a connection here; those who are unaware need only wait for the discussion of toxic masculinity and Ramón's internal motivations further below.

Ramón Espejo also claims to hate people and prefer solitude. He deals with the tension he feels around people by drinking, which makes him even more violent, but he does not see any of

it as a problem because he attributes it to ‘normal’ masculinity: “whenever he got around people, it always seemed to end like this...[A]s usual someone had said or done something to enrage him...Ramón didn’t like it, but he wasn’t ashamed of it either. He was a man” (12). He prefers not only the spatial solitude of exploring the jungle, but also the emotional solitude of having no intimate relationships. Ramón has no close friends, maintaining that “the comfort offered by friends [is] as painful and humiliating as being mocked” (159). In other words, being invulnerable is such an important quality for Ramón that he avoids forming close relationships because of it.

The relationship with his girlfriend Elena is bitter (16), untrusting (242), unloving (126), and unequal. Ramón is so unable to share and communicate with her that he compares her to an alien as well as an animal (244). More importantly, the relationship is violent. The narration seems to take special care to describe the domestic abuse as mutual, with Ramón escalating the fight from verbal to physical only slightly more often than Elena. However, because Elena is a woman, her violent nature gets her labeled by Ramón as “crazy” (126, 242, and 247) with an “uncertain mind” (31), whereas he, himself an actual murderer, considers himself sane.

All these characteristics lead me to the conclusion that Ramón Espejo emulates the ideals of hegemonic masculinity to a harmful extreme. As Connell has been formulating since the late 1980s, in cultures where masculinity has a hierarchy, the top position is taken by males who perform some type of hegemonic masculinity (Connell 81). In the case of contemporary Western world, hegemonic masculinity includes the devaluation of women as well as men who are found to be effeminate; homophobia; a high degree of competitiveness and one-upmanship; a refusal to admit weakness or any sort of dependency; and an inability to express emotions besides anger (Brittan). Ramón Espejo is a match for all these attributes except perhaps for homophobia.

This behavior, however, does not automatically provide Ramón with all the benefits and privileges of hegemonic masculinity, or as Connell calls it, the patriarchal dividend (79). In her model of four masculinities, hegemonic attributes are also emulated, sometimes to an overcompensating and violent degree, by marginalized masculinities whose access to power and success is denied due to their class, race, or other marginalizing factors (83). Ramón is part Yaqui, a Native American bloodline that the novel defines by its centuries of persecution (Martin et. al 39), and part Mexican, a blood relation that is attributed to rape (105). As a Hispanic immigrant from Earth to a planet colonized by Portuguese speakers, he has gone “from being nothing on Earth to being nothing on a colony world” (110). In other words, Ramón Espejo fits the position of marginalized masculinity and embodies its tendency to emulate hegemonic behavior in order to compensate for lack of power.

When these behaviors are driven to an extreme that is dangerous for women, other men, as well as oneself, the gender performance slips into what we call toxic masculinity, or a “constellation of socially regressive male traits that serve to foster domination, the devaluation of women, homophobia, and wanton violence” (Kupers 714). This is also true for Ramón Espejo, whose rage triggered by a fragile ego drives him not only to bar fights and domestic abuse, but also to murder, self-sabotage, and a cathartic moment of self-destruction that I describe in the following analysis of the storyline.

Even the briefest summary of *Hunter’s Run* betrays that masculinity plays a significant role in the storyline: Having left town after murdering an ambassador in a bar fight, Ramón’s prospecting leads him to discover a hidden alien race. They capture him, bind him with a tentacle to one of their own, and order him to hunt down another human that has discovered them and escaped. Along the way, the alien companion Maneck tries to understand what makes men violent and contradictory in nature. After a while, Ramón finds out that the escaped human is in fact the

original Ramón Espejo—and the new point-of-view character is his clone, created by the aliens to be his own hunter. Clone Ramón manages to escape Maneck and join forces with Original Ramón, but this leads him to a realization that under all his posturing and bravado, he hates himself. The two fight and the clone kills the original with a promise to replace him and become a better man. When he returns to the city, he protects the hiding alien race and stops hitting his girlfriend, but he does not change beyond that.

Let us take a closer look at the moment when Clone Ramón uses what he thinks are his last words to tell his original self: “You know what? Ramón? You don’t like yourself very much” (218), understating his realization that he hates himself. I find this to be the emotional climax of the story. At this point in the narrative, the clone has spent several days trying to navigate Original Ramón’s fragile ego, explosive temperament and desperate desire to dominate the other man, and even though he knows his own psychology like no one else, he still finds the task nigh impossible. While the two are on the run from an alien through a jungle that is trying to eat them, Original Ramón has been taking valuable time for petty fights, posturing, and unnecessary death threats. Seeing himself from the outside for the first time, the clone calls this behavior “alienating and stupid” (Martin et. al 198) and then describes Original Ramón as “wound tight around his fears and ready to blame everyone but himself. All that insecurity and rage fizzing inside him, ready to explode at the slightest provocation” (201). This reasoning for Ramón’s disillusion with himself echoes the criticisms of toxic masculinity, where dominating behavior and violence is found to be rooted in irrational fears and insecurities.

Ramón’s discovered self-hate is the emotional climax of *Hunter’s Run* not only because it drives the clone to kill the original, but also because it answers several questions that haunt him throughout the novel.

The first one is: Why did you kill the ambassador? The details preceding the bar fight from the first chapter are revealed gradually throughout the story, suggesting that an important mystery is being revealed clue by clue. The greatest piece of the puzzle is provided by Clone Ramón shortly before he kills Original Ramón: “You killed him because you thought it would make them like you!...[B]ecause you thought all those people in the [bar] would think you were a fucking hero! You’re pathetic!” (216) The confession goes against Ramón’s proclamations about hating people and refusing to be part of a community. When combined with the admission that Ramón blames everyone but himself for his fears and insecurities (201), it reveals a complete picture of Ramón projecting his insecurity about not being accepted (105) or validated (159) onto people and preferring to sabotage himself through antisocial and aggressive behavior before he gets rejected. As a propagator of hegemonic values, Ramón believes a proper man should never depend on anyone, which is why he finds the fact that he killed “out of a need to be part of something” (246) so pathetic. The final clue to the death of the ambassador comes towards the very end of the plot, and it is a flashback showing that what enraged the people in the bar, including Ramón, was the ambassador’s loud boasting about having power and planning to show it by raping his female coworker that night. In other words, Ramón killed him for being a prime example of toxic masculinity, something he eventually admits he hates about himself.

The second question that Ramón addresses multiple times is: Why do you stay in an unhealthy relationship with ‘crazy’ Elena? He usually brushes this off with talk of “deserving each other” (25, 126), but in the climactic fight scene, Clone Ramón again cuts to the truth: “[B]ecause you’re scared not to. Because, without her, you know you aren’t part of anything or anyone” (215). This reveals not only a desire to belong, but also a fear of being truly alone, not depending on anyone at all—another weakness that would make a toxic man hate himself.

The third question is mostly implicit, hiding under the second one: Why did you never go back to Lianna, the girl you could love? It is also answered when Ramón acknowledges his self-hatred. Throughout the novel, Ramón's full name is often brought up as a show of bravado in front of others or simply to himself, with proclamations about Ramón Espejo being tough (107, 116, 225, 244), Ramón Espejo vowing to kill the alien who has bested him (41), and Ramón Espejo kneeling to nobody (49). However, when Clone Ramón returns to the city and tries to approach Lianna, he takes an objective look at himself and gives up, knowing "what Lianna would see when she looked at him. She'd see Ramón Espejo" (268). This is the first time the protagonist uses his full name in a self-deprecating manner, just after he describes himself as a pathetic man unworthy of Lianna's love.

As a bonus piece of evidence that the discovery of Ramón's self-hatred is what truly ties the novel together, it also explains several lines in the Overture. The Overture is a short flash-forward scene placed before Chapter One where Clone Ramón is born and awakened. His first conscious thought is to deny the disappointment at existing (1), or in other words, painting over something (his self-hatred) with denial. Then, he thinks he might be in hell, and he finds the punishment of having to be "always and forever himself" (3) fitting—foreshadowing that later, there will be an important scene when he admits that his feelings towards himself are much more negative than his boasting lets on.

A Story about Masculinity: The Language

Even if the setting, the protagonist, or the storyline were not laden with the theme of masculinity as much as they are, the language alone would still firmly qualify this novel as a story about masculinity. The word man is strikingly overused, with fascinating variations to its function and meaning. I discuss these contextual categories below.

I have already addressed the setting of the novel and its gendered descriptions of space colonization, where the more fitting synonym for "humanity" is "mankind" (14) because the leadership of the human civilization is patriarchal. This trend of discussing men instead of people goes much further in *Hunter's Run*, and it seems to be closely tied to Ramón's obsessions with hegemonic masculinity.

Firstly, Ramón's narration repeatedly positions his lifestyle as that of men instead of people, giving the narration the tone of masculinized genre fiction such as noir: he smokes a cigarette "like a man at an execution" (37), he recognizes the sound of spaceships "the way men in ages past ha[ve] known the wail of trains" (233), and he considers stopping the lifestyle of "[k]illing men or having them try to kill him" (173).

But that is not all. Whenever the alien Maneck asks Clone Ramón about humanity, Ramón gives specifically gendered answers. When Maneck asks what makes people kill, Ramón lists the most common reasons for men:

Men kill for all sorts of reasons. If someone's going to kill you, you kill them first. Or if they're fucking your wife. Or sometimes men will be so poor they have to rob someone for money. That can go too far. Or if someone declares war, then soldiers go and kill each other. (71)

When Maneck asks why Ramón has tried to escape, Ramón responds: "Because a man is supposed to be free" (78), and when asked about freedom, he yet again answers only for men:

“Free is being your own goddamn man! Free is not answering to anybody for anything! Not your boss, not your woman, not the *pinche* governor and his *pinche* little army!” (78). Even the concept of eating has to be narrowed down to men: “Dead men don’t shit, or eat, but living men have to, or they soon stop living” (79). When teaching Maneck about alcohol, Ramón again immediately slips into masculine terms: “when you drink it, when a man drinks it” (89); and concludes his ode to alcohol thusly: “Hard liquor makes a man able to stand the things he can’t stand. It makes him free the way nothing else can” (90). Gender-neutral terms also escape Ramón when he is explaining laughter: “Laughter is a good thing...A man who cannot laugh is nothing” (103). And finally, this is how he describes the human tendency for pattern recognition and storytelling: “Men, they make sense of the universe. They make stories about it and then see if they are right. It’s what we do” (132). To summarize, when Ramón calls himself “the guy who can tell you about being a man” (Ibid.), he literally means that he can only teach Maneck about the male experience, not humanity as a whole.

Clone Ramón’s tendency to masculinize humanity goes so far as to invade his ruminations about the very basics of being human. Aware of being a freshly made clone, he compares himself to Maneck and concludes that Maneck is a monster (104) far removed from humanity (106), while Ramón, on the other hand, is “a man” (104, 106)—not “a human”. When he wonders whether the cloning vat added something to his genes, he questions his behavior thusly: “[is] that really how a man would react?” (107). In any other sci-fi story, the word man would have been replaced by ‘human’, since what is being discussed is the contrast between humans and aliens. Another case of this is when Clone Ramón is pondering his future: “He could be someone new. How many men ha[ve] dreamed of that, and how few [have had] the chance?” (173). Since there is no further elaboration about men having different chances of starting new lives in São Paulo than women, the statement seems almost unnatural without the gender-neutral ‘people’ as its subject. That is, unless the writing is intended to emphasize masculinity everywhere it can.

Unsurprisingly, Ramón shares many opinions on masculinity in his internal monologues. He finds pride in displaying traditionally masculine looks and behavior, describing himself as an independent prospector who drinks hard, fights hard, and does not care what anyone thinks of him (12), claiming that he likes his scars because they make him look strong (13), and later worrying that if the cloning had taken away his ability to grow facial hair, they would have “turned him into a woman” (141). He uses these sources of pride to make excuses for his violent behavior as well, proclaiming that he is not ashamed of inciting bar fights and ending them with knives because “He [is] a man...By God, he [is] a man!” (12).

On other hand, Ramón sometimes notices how limiting his self-imposed masculine standards can be. Despite the hostility he feels towards his girlfriend, he realizes he would never cheat on her simply because it is not “something that a real man [does]” (142). He also refuses to share his feelings about the issues he has with being around people because it is not “the sort of thing men [do]” (159).

Oftentimes, Ramón uses the word man as a shining ideal to be aspired to. Before he meets himself, Clone Ramón is proud of the fight Original Ramón has put up against the aliens, showing them “what a *man* could do” (100, emphasis in the original). At one point, he screams at Maneck: “Have some balls! Be a *man*!” (121, emphasis in the original), hoping to humiliate him into reckless action. Later, Original Ramón praises Clone Ramón’s work exactly twice, using the phrase “you did a man’s job of it” both times (164 and 204). Most poignantly, his last words before he is murdered by his clone are: “Tell them I died like a man!” (220).

This shining ideal, however, crosses over into unreachable. It starts with Ramón calling a dead man “a little whore” for getting killed by a street gang, realizing he has just said “that any real man ought to be able to stand up against eight thugs” (13). With Maneck, after he explains the concept of freedom, he surmises that it is not possible to be truly free, but that “you aren’t a real man if you don’t try” (78). Later yet, Ramón decides that real men never cheat on their women (142). In short, every time the phrase “real man” is brought up in *Hunter’s Run*, ‘real’ (hegemonic) masculinity becomes more difficult to achieve. In situations where Ramón finds that the standards of masculinity are not being held up, he calls the man involved a woman (141), a little girl (175), a schoolgirl (199), a little whore (13), or a pussy (215), using the tradition of misogynistic language to raise the masculine above the feminine and then use the feminine as an insult.

The high standards Ramón puts on masculinity catch up with him in his weaker moments even before he admits that he hates himself. He says that he is “a better man” (126) on his own in the jungle, when he is less irritable, more in control, and so he never has to drink. Once Clone Ramón joins forces with Original Ramón, he comments that he has been “already quite aware of his own failings as a man” (179) but seeing himself from the outside makes his opinion even worse. As the clone kills the original, he announces: “Yes, I am [a monster]. And I’m *still* a better man than you” (214, emphasis in the original). Because of the anti-climactic ending, however, Clone Ramón must take these words back, lamenting that “even that sad sack of shit he’d dropped into the river had been a better man than he made himself out to be” (242-3). The quest to become a better man, which follows Ramón arguably since the very beginning of the novel, is fulfilled to a rather dubious degree, as I will address further in the next section of the paper.

As if that was not enough, there is one more frequent use of the word man in the novel. When Clone Ramón and Maneck start hunting the human that has managed to escape, Clone Ramón says: “living men have to [eat], or they soon stop living...The *man* will have to eat too” (79, emphasis in the original). From then on, whenever they talk about the human who turns out to be Original Ramón, Maneck and the clone call him “the man”. Considering Ramón’s marginalized status in the society and diminished position in the jungle’s food chain, I highly doubt that this is an intended reference to The Man, i.e. the authority or the man in power. It does, however, turn the escaped human into even more of a walking representation of masculinity, a metaphor made flesh as the clone is hunting down his own masculine identity.

The ‘man’ in Maneck’s name is also no coincidence. It is, after all, the difference between himself and the alien that makes Clone Ramón realize that even though he has been isolating himself from humanity for most of his life, human (or “man”) is what he is. For a comparison to even be considered, the hive-minded, animalistic, asexual creature needs to at least have a man-adjacent name.

The Disappointing Anticlimax of *Hunter’s Run*

For a reader who has noticed this heavily pronounced theme and how crucial it is in the story, the novel provides a rather underwhelming ending. Having acknowledged his monstrosity and self-hatred, Clone Ramón returns to the city “ready to be someone new” (243), to become “[h]imself like he’d always been, only better” (Ibid.). He starts by protecting Maneck’s race from the alien super-colonizers who would have exterminated them; and then he attempts to break up with Elena. On his way to Lianna, however, his courage deserts him and he immediately returns to Elena’s door. Their unequal relationship full of animosity continues, with the only adjustment being that when the fight is about “something important” (272), the new Ramón makes himself

discuss it calmly instead of becoming violent. His ‘crazy’ Elena, who has not gone through the same existential crises and self-discoveries, is surprisingly capable of following the same rule.

Disappointingly, Clone Ramón does not change any further than that. He is still ill-tempered around people and has to go on prospecting trips when his patience runs out (271). Worst of all, Ramón never lets go of the toxic cycle of feeling “disgust” (257) and “embarrassment” (264) for any apparent weakness, and still follows it up with rage (249, 257). This part of Ramón’s psychology is carefully unpackaged and criticized throughout the novel, only to remain completely unresolved at the end. For a moment, Clone Ramón feels disappointed by his lack of change, until he enters the final stage of his character development. “I thought for a while I was someone else, but...[t]o be Ramón and not Ramón is *aubre* [contradictory]” (270) he admits, using Maneck’s terminology as if this was a lesson he has learned from the pacifist, collectivist alien race. The very ending is the epitome of an anticlimax, showing Ramón accepting his bad opinion of himself as “another monster” (276) that is incapable of changing that about himself.

Unsurprisingly, this is not the original ending. The 2005 novella version ends with Ramón breaking up with Elena and beginning the transformation into a better man and a more respectable part of the society. The new ending was apparently championed by the third author, Daniel Abraham, who insists that Ramón’s character progression from “an alienated, violent monster in the first chapter” to “an alienated, violent monster who’s more at peace with that identity” is much more psychologically realistic and satisfying (288). A reading of *Hunter’s Run* focused on gender, on the other hand, is very unsatisfying due to the pessimistic portrayal of how little change in gender performance within one man can be achieved, even when said man is motivated by the most brutal wake-up call possible, and even when he claims to be permanently changed by that one time he was telepathically connected with Maneck’s counter-hegemonic hive mind (129).

For me, the greatest twist in this story comes after the ending, in the Afterword and Author Q & A sections. Here, the interviewer and all three authors agree that the main themes of *Hunter’s Run* are humanity, identity, and loyalty, completely ignoring that these concepts are only discussed in masculine terms. Let us not forget that one of the three authors is George R. R. Martin, a known feminist author of fantasy and sci-fi. In his Q & A, he admits to having been inspired by Ursula Le Guin’s *Left Hand of Darkness*, a story he describes as “a serious exploration of sex and gender, which is one part of being human” (284). In *Hunter’s Run*, however, he claims to explore “other questions about what it means to be human” (Ibid.), suggesting that he either decided not to advertise the theme of gender out of fear that it would drive away sci-fi readers of anti-feminist persuasion, or that even in his eyes, masculinity does not register as a gender category.

This brings me back to Kimmel’s concept of invisible masculinity. As he puts it, the discursive mechanism of making masculinity the norm and femininity the deviancy affects even the definitions of “vague social science concepts like ‘identity,’ ‘self,’ or ‘deviance’” (7). Consequently, even the most basic discourse about these topics can get away with addressing only half of the human race—oftentimes out of ignorance and blindness rather than maliciousness. Judging from the Q & A, this seems to be the case of *Hunter’s Run*, a story that was put together by three young men at the time: Dozois and Martin began working on it in 1976, when they were in their late twenties, and Abraham entered the project before 2005, in his mid-thirties.

It is possible that all three authors managed to write a story with a toxic male protagonist who obsesses over manliness in his inner monologues, discussing the ideals, standards, and limitations of being a proper man in every chapter; a story that provides a cautionary tale as well as a scathing criticism of hegemonic masculinity; without any of them realizing it. Dozois even

claims that Ramón Espejo is an Everyman figure (282)! What is even more bizarre is that none of the publishers, reviewers, or scholars seem to have noticed this major theme so far.

How is this possible in 2007? How much longer will masculinity stay invisible to the public as well as most scholars? How many more books were published in the past and are still being published that revolve around masculinity this richly and intensely without anyone noticing? That is something I intend to find out with my future research, and I invite other feminist scholars to join me.

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³ Note: I am quoting from a chapter (pp. 3-15) that was first published in 1993 as this essay:
Kimmel, Michael S. "Invisible Masculinity." *Society*, vol. 30, issue 6, September 1993, pp. 28–35.