"The boy who couldn't kill" – Subversions of toxic masculinity through feminist care ethic in Patrick Ness' *Chaos Walking*

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In this thesis I examine Patrick Ness' *Chaos Walking* trilogy, a dystopian Young Adult series consisting of *The Knife of Never Letting Go* (2008), *The Ask and the Answer* (2009) and *Monsters of Men* (2010), and how it addresses themes of masculinity, gender and identity. The series' main character Todd is a boy on the verge of adulthood, eager to become a man but struggling to conform to the requirements of masculinity placed on him by his community. The conflict between Todd's identity and his need to meet society's expectations of masculinity is the driving force of his narrative and the central theme of the series.

My thesis focuses on the explorations of masculinity in the series and the connections between masculinity and care. I argue that toxic masculinity can be subverted through the feminist care ethic, as demonstrated by Todd's character development. Todd's obsession with proving his manhood through acts of violence and control is symptomatic of toxic masculinity, of which Todd is only able to rid himself by forming mutually caring relationships with others and prioritising care over power. I approach my subject from the point of view of masculinity studies and feminist theory, with an emphasis on hegemonic and toxic masculinity and the feminist care ethic.

In my thesis I explore the ways toxic masculinity in *Chaos Walking* manifests itself both in the wider structures of society as well as the identities and actions of individuals, and the ways these two spheres influence each other. I look at the ways societal structures of gender and masculinity influence Todd's self-image and actions, and how Todd's changing identity, in turn, affects his views on society and masculinity. My analysis focuses on how Todd views and experiences with different aspects of toxic masculinity, such as sexism, gendered violence and suppression of emotion, and how they are subverted through an ethic of care that promotes equality, non-violence, emotional vulnerability and connection.

Keywords: young adult literature, dystopia, masculinity, gender, care ethic

Table of contents

1 Introduction

In her 2004 book *The Will to Change: Men, Masculinity and Love*, feminist writer bell hooks (2004, 111) states:

> There is little work done from a feminist standpoint concentrating on boyhood. No significant body of feminist writing addresses boys directly, letting them know how they can construct an identity that is not rooted in sexism. There is no body of feminist children's literature that can serve as an alternative to patriarchal perspectives, which abound in the world of children's books.

While literature for children and adolescents has been tackling questions of gender for a long time and even adopted a more feminist approach to particularly its female characters, hooks was correct in noting that the roles assigned to boys have been slower to change (Nikolajeva 2010, 106). It would not be long, however, until the deficiency identified by hooks began to be remedied. Within a few years of hooks' statement, a sudden influx of dystopian fiction for adolescent readers dominated the literary scene and brought with it a significant shift in the genre's approach to gender and masculinity.

Patrick Ness's *Chaos Walking* trilogy, consisting of *The Knife of Never Letting Go* ([2008] 2014), *The Ask and the Answer* ([2009] 2014) and *Monsters of Men* ([2010] 2014), was published to great acclaim between 2008 and 2010. It has won several literary awards, such as the Carnegie Medal, Guardian Award and the Costa Children's Book Award, and received praise for its compelling take on difficult themes, such as war, individual and cultural trauma and redemption (Kennon 2017, 25). Along with its contemporaries within the genre, such as Suzanne Collins' *The Hunger Games* series, *Chaos Walking* also brings questions of gender roles and performances to the forefront.

Chaos Walking is a Young Adult (henceforth YA) series, which falls under the label of science fiction, or more specifically dystopian fiction. The story is set on a strange planet, colonised by Christian settlers from Earth in search of a new start away from the violence and disasters of Old World. The new planet is Earth-like in its conditions, but inhabited by an alien race which the humans call Spackle and with which they almost immediately come in conflict. Another peculiarity of the planet is a phenomenon called the Noise, a telepathic voice projecting the thoughts of men and animals out loud into the minds of others, merging everyone's thoughts into a cacophony of words and images. Women do not emit a Noise, but can hear the thoughts of men in their heads as well.

The main character of *Chaos Walking* is Todd Hewitt, a boy approaching his thirteenth birthday when he will, according to his town's customs, become a man. The first novel of the series, *The Knife of Never Letting Go* (henceforth *Knife*) describes Todd's flight from his secluded and oppressive hometown called Prentisstown and his encounter with Viola, a girl whose scout ship crashed as she and her parents were arriving to prepare the way for new settlers. Todd and Viola team up and have to flee from the growing army of the Mayor of Prentisstown, as well as the town's fanatical religious leader Aaron, both of whom have a particular investment in Todd and his impending transition to adulthood. The second novel, *The Ask and the Answer* (henceforth *Ask*) follows Todd's and Viola's lives after their arrival to the city of Haven, where they get caught up in the rivalry between the Mayor and a resistance leader called Mistress Coyle and in the starting of a new war between the humans and the planet's native aliens. This war and its aftermath are then chronicled in the third and final instalment, *Monsters of Men* (henceforth *Monsters*).

In this thesis I argue that in *Chaos Walking* and the character of Todd in particular, conventions of toxic masculinity are subverted through the feminist care ethic. From the beginning, Todd is obsessed with the idea of manhood, counting days to his birthday when he is supposed to finally become a man, and hyperfocusing on meeting the requirements of manhood, which, according to the doctrines of Prentisstown, means the ability to kill a man. Todd's status as the last boy in Prentisstown is a great source of distress and conflict for him and largely defines his identity in the first novel and in many ways throughout the series (Kennon 2017, 26). As Todd's ideas of manhood start to broaden and he learns to question the models of masculinity he has been raised to emulate, the questions surrounding his identity and the society he lives in become more complex as well. I argue that Todd's fixation on masculinity and the violent and limited ideas of manhood prevalent in his society are facets of toxic masculinity, which Todd is only able to abandon through forming caring relationships with people and prioritising care over power.

As dystopian YA fiction has become increasingly popular in the last decade or so, there has also been an influx of research on the topic. A particular emphasis has been placed on feminist perspectives on gender roles within YA dystopias due to the large number of compelling female main characters present within the genre, such as Katniss Everdeen in *The Hunger Games* trilogy (2008–2010) or Tris Prior in the *Divergent*

trilogy (2011–2013). Themes of masculinity and the roles assigned to the male characters, however, have evoked less of an academic response (Seymour 2016, 627; Kennon 2017, 27). Only in the recent years have there been more papers written on the boys of dystopia by academics such as Jessica Seymour and Patricia Kennon, both of whom have addressed themes of masculinity within YA dystopias, including *Chaos Walking*, and upon whose work I build in this thesis.

I examine the novels from the point of view of feminist criticism in conjunction with masculinity studies, which, for the purposes of this thesis, I consider a component of feminist theory. This theoretical approach is further explored in section 2.1. My argument is supported by Seymour's article "Murder Me…Become a Man": Establishing the Masculine Care Circle in Young Adult Dystopia" (2016) and Kennon's article "Monsters of Men: Masculinity and the Other in Patrick Ness's *Chaos Walking* Series" (2017). I endeavour to expand upon Kennon's and Seymour's analyses by further examining Todd's ideas and portrayals of masculinity and how they are transformed and expanded by prioritising care and affection over violence and control throughout the *Chaos Walking* trilogy.

To start off, I give an overview of the field of masculinity studies and its relationship with feminist theory. I also establish the concepts of hegemonic and toxic masculinity as well as the feminist care ethic and how they are applied in my research. Secondly, I introduce the genre of YA dystopia and examine the role of gender, masculinity and care within the genre. I then move on to examining gender and masculinity in the context of Todd and *Chaos Walking*, and how the feminist care ethic works to subvert the elements of toxic masculinity in his story. First I examine the gendered structures of New World and how toxic masculinity affects Todd's role in his society and his perspective on the world. I focus specifically on themes of sexism and gender roles, sexualisation of women and gendered violence, and race and xenophobia. After that I take a look at Todd's image of self and how it is shaped and affected by different aspects and expectations of toxic masculinity, such as the emphasis on murder, violence, and suppression of emotion, and the significance of paternal influence in the formation of masculinity and identity.

2 Masculinity and feminist theory

Feminist literary criticism has its roots in the women's movements of 1960s and onwards and as such should not be seen as merely a distant theoretical relative of feminism, but a pivotal part of it (Barry [1994] 2009, 116–117). Feminists argued that literary representations of women not only reflect, but also directly influence the attitudes of readers and society at large, and that examining these representations is therefore a feminist act (Barry [1994] 2009, 117).

While feminist theory has historically been focused mainly on women's experiences, masculinity has also always been a point of interest. After all, men's investment in the promotion of certain dominating forms of masculinity has been a significant contributor to women's oppression (Kimmel 1994, vii). Feminist theory on masculinity, however, was largely focused on men's categorical power over women, which did not correspond with men's own personal experiences of powerlessness. This contradiction led many men to reject feminist perspectives on masculinity altogether and helped create the narrative of disparity between feminism and concepts of masculinity (Kimmel 1994, vii–viii).

In this section I introduce the theoretical frameworks I use in my thesis. First I give a brief overlook of the relationship between feminist theory and masculinity studies and why I choose to use them in conjunction with each other. Secondly, I introduce the concepts of hegemonic masculinity and toxic masculinity as defined by Australian sociologist Raewyn Connell (most of whose works have been published under the moniker R. W. Connell, which is how she is also listed in my list of references) and American psychiatrist Terry A. Kupers and examine their role and significance in theorising about masculinity. Thirdly, I establish the concept of feminist care ethic with reference to American psychologist Carol Gilligan's book *In A Different Voice* ([1982] 2001) as well as other works that have addressed the topic in Gilligan's wake, and how the concept has been applied to masculinity studies.

2.1 Masculinity studies and feminist theory

Men studying men is not a new concept. As Jeff Hearn (2004, 49) puts it: "Men have been studying men for a long time, and calling it 'History', 'Sociology', or whatever."

The assumption of maleness as a neutral state has coloured much of human history and knowledge, so much so that "categories of men and masculinity are taken for granted in the social sciences, in sociology, and indeed in everyday social life" (Hearn and Collinson 1994, 98). Therefore, the purpose and necessity of a "men's studies" could be called into question; is not most research "men's"?

Harry Brod ([1987] 1992b, 40) defines masculinity studies as "the study of masculinities and male experiences as specific and varying social-historical-cultural formations." According to Brod (ibid.), the purpose of masculinity studies – or men's studies, as he refers to it – is to examine men as a gendered group on par with women, not as a universal or neutral mode of being. Masculinity studies does not seek to identify one unified, monolithic form of masculinity, but to acknowledge that

> [a]lthough dominant or hegemonic forms of masculinity work constantly to maintain an appearance of permanence, stability and naturalness, the numerous masculinities in every society are contingent, fluid, socially and historically constructed, changeable and constantly changing, variously institutionalized, and recreated through media representations and individual and collective performances.
>
> (Gardiner 2002b, 11)

Masculinity studies, then, seeks to examine masculinity as a multifaceted and gendered concept instead of seeing it as a natural, ungendered state and, additionally, to acknowledge the power dynamics that exist not only between men and women but between different forms of masculinity (Gardiner 2002b, 14). The purpose of masculinity studies is twofold and somewhat contradictory: "to *name* men and masculinity; to make those categories visible and to recognize their power; and to *deconstruct* them, to undermine, subvert, and dismantle them" (Hearn and Collinson 1994, 98, emphases as in the original). Therefore it is the task of masculinity studies to not only acknowledge and examine categories of masculinity, but to actively and critically participate in their deconstruction.

There are various schools of thought when it comes to the name of the field. Most early works use the term 'Men's Studies', but that title has been contested for being too limited and ambiguous, as it does not specify whether it refers to studies on or by men, and creates a false parallel with women's studies while at the same time excluding women from it altogether (Hearn 2004, 49–50). In the 1990s 'men' gave way to 'masculinity' in an attempt to highlight the inclusivity and versatility of the field as

well as the ways of being male that were being studied within it (Clatterbaugh 1998, 24–25). This new title also faced criticism for being too vague, as, according to Kenneth Clatterbaugh (1998, 29), the whole meaning of 'masculinity' is so nebulous as to be nearly impossible to pin down or define. Alternative titles used are, among others, "Critical Studies on Men", or CSM (Hearn 2004) and "Men and masculinity studies", or MMS (Waling 2019). I agree with Hearn on the limitations of the title 'men's studies', and while I also acknowledge the shortcomings of 'masculinity studies', it is the term I choose to use in this thesis. Despite its relative ambiguity, I find it both comprehensive and concise enough to convey the breadth of the field and the multiple conceptions of men and masculinity that it covers. As I highlight in this section, the critical nature of the approach is implied in my use of the term.

The relationship between masculinity studies and feminist theory is historically variable and somewhat conflicted. In the early days of the women's liberation movement in the 1960s, feminism and masculinity were considered antagonistic concepts, as some of the more radical feminist voices considered all men as oppressors of women and masculinity as their tool of oppression. The feeling of antagonism was mutual, as many men in turn ridiculed feminist theory and blamed any supposed crises of masculinity on feminism. However, other schools of thought within feminism were more willing to identify the social structures of gendered power rather than individual men as the source of oppression (Gardiner 2002b, 2–4).

Scott Coltrane (1994, 41–42) dates the emergence of men's studies back to the 1970s, when men began writing about their experiences with the confines of masculinity, such as the requirement of toughness and the difficulty of expressing their feelings. Most of these writings were from a very personal, confessional point of view, with little regard to the power dynamics of gender relations or the privileges afforded to men at the expense of women (Coltrane 1994, 41). However, a different branch of research on masculinity, inspired and informed by feminist theory, was born to rectify this oversight, focusing primarily on the societal structures of power of men over women. This could be identified as the starting point of masculinity studies as they are understood today.

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s masculinity studies maintained a "conflicted dependency" on feminist theory, existing mostly as a subsection of women's studies in universities (Gardiner 2002b, 2). While many feminist women were concerned with

masculinity studies seizing resources and opportunities and therefore taking space from women's studies, but pro-feminist men, such as Brod ([1987] 1992b, 60) assure that "[m]en's studies calls for qualitatively different, not quantitatively more, attention to men. We should be clear that men's studies is a complement, not a cooptation, of women's studies." The 1990s saw the rise of so-called "masculinist men's movements", which "sought to restore male dominance over women and reverse feminist advances" (Gardiner 2002b, 2) and tended to view masculinity from a more positivist, less critical point of view (Coltrane 1994, 42–43). The masculinist movements provide an opposing force to the feminist influences on masculinity studies, but, at least within the academic field, the influence of the masculinist movement has remained fairly marginal. Masculinity studies has since, for the most part, become an independent academic entity, but often operates intersectionally with gender studies, postcolonial studies and queer theory.

Examining the intertwined histories of feminist theory and masculinity studies, it becomes clear that they have much to gain from each other. Most current schools of masculinity studies recognise the benefits of an approach informed and inspired by feminist theories and the benefits offered to both by a collaborative relationship (Gardiner 2002b, 11). However, this principle does not necessarily always manifest in practice. While masculinity studies does claim to be "sympathetic to feminism", the validity of that claim has been critiqued by many feminists (Waling 2019, 91). According to Anthony McMahon (1993, 675), much of the literature written within the field of masculinity studies either disregards feminist theory entirely or "selectively appropriates forms of feminism whose accounts of gender relations de-emphasize key issues of sexual politics". Victoria Robinson (2003, 130–131) also criticises the field for only making token references to feminism without real engagement and often without credit, and only acknowledging feminist voices sympathetic to their causes.

While pro-feminist men have argued from the beginning that the purpose of masculinity studies is to complement feminism, not co-opt or compete with it, this complement approach has also been criticised for ignoring the problematic power dynamics that still necessarily exist in such a relationship (Robinson 2003, 129). In turn, the pro-feminist approach to masculinity studies has also garnered criticism from male scholars who consider gender studies and the associated feminist approach superfluous

and irrelevant (Coltrane 1994, 43). Therefore, it is safe to say that the relationship between masculinity studies and feminist theory is not without its points of contention.

Why, then, should masculinity studies take on a feminist approach to masculinity? Coltrane (1994, 43) has a suggestion: "The short answer is that gender is too important to ignore and that feminist theories explain more about gender than other theories." As such, it is in the best interest of masculinity studies scholars – and men in general – to utilise a feminist approach. However, in order to claim a pro-feminist approach to masculinity studies, the power relations and tensions between the two must be acknowledged and feminist influences mindfully and consciously applied – and credited – as to avoid an appropriative and exploitative dynamic. Hence, conflicted as the relationship between feminism and masculinity studies may be, I find it counterproductive to attempt to separate them or to examine masculinity without being informed by feminism.

As many pro-feminist men argue, the limited and limiting confines of masculinity serve to uphold patriarchal social structures harmful to both men and women, forcing one to perform a narrow and emotionally stunting role while relying on the oppression of the other (Gardiner 2002b, 5–6). Both masculinity studies as well as feminism seek to call into question these harmful practices and offer alternate modes of masculinity and gender as a whole. I find the attempts made within masculinity studies to deconstruct and undermine harmful modes of masculinity and patriarchal power structures to be well aligned with feminist interests. Therefore I do not find it contradictory or counterproductive to combine the theories and approaches of masculinity studies and feminist theory in my thesis.

It is, however, important to note that I am a woman and therefore cannot speak authoritatively on the lived experiences of men or approach the theories I use from a personal point of view. In this thesis I apply the methods of feminist literary theory to examine societal structures of gender and masculinity as they appear in the *Chaos Walking* trilogy and therefore any claims I make about the nature of masculinity or the experiences of men should be viewed through that lens. Furthermore, my perspectives on gender and masculinity are informed and coloured by my experiences living in an overwhelmingly white European society, which ought to be taken into account when I present my views on hegemonic masculinity, which will be examined in the following section.

2.2 Hegemonic and toxic masculinity

The introduction of the term 'hegemonic masculinity' to academia has been primarily attributed to Connell, who brought it to general attention in her 1995 book *Masculinities.* Connell's theory is considered to be among the most influential in the field of masculinity studies and it has had a strong and widespread impact on the fields of sociology and gender studies (Wedgwood 2009, 329). While the field has naturally continued to develop and change in the more than two decades following *Masculinities*, Connell's theory still defends its position as a cornerstone of masculinity studies.

In *Masculinities,* Connell ([1995] 1999, 77) defines hegemonic masculinity as "the configuration of gender practices which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women." The term 'hegemony', originally coined by Antonio Gramsci, in this context refers to "the cultural dynamic by which a group claims and sustains a leading position in social life" (Connell [1995] 1999, 77). Hegemonic masculinity, therefore, refers to the culturally dominant version of manhood currently accepted in a certain society. Connell (ibid.) emphasizes that hegemonic masculinity is a "historically mobile" term, which describes the "currently accepted strategy" of performing and embodying maleness, and is subject to change and can always be contested.

The goal of hegemonic masculinity, according to Connell, is to maintain a hierarchy of power where men are superior to women. Therefore it could be argued that the goal of hegemonic masculinity is essentially a patriarchy, or a society that "promotes male privilege by being *male dominated*, *male identified*, and *male centered*", and which relies on the oppression of women to maintain itself (Johnson 2014, 5–6, emphasis as in the original). For this reason hegemonic masculinity is shaped mainly in contrast to women and femininity, as well as such versions of masculinity that steer too close to the feminine (Connell [1995] 1999, 40, 78). As such the concept of hegemonic masculinity is often also closely tied to homophobia. Furthermore, race and class also play an important part in the formation of hegemonic

masculinity, as marginalised masculinities that fail to meet the hegemonic standard are presented as subordinate.

In addition to the dynamic of dominance and subordination between hegemonic masculinity and the subordinated masculinities, Connell also identifies another power dynamic that contributes to the maintenance of hegemony. As Connell points out, the ideal promoted by hegemonic masculinity applies to relatively few men as such. However, most men, even those who do not necessarily embody the dominant mode of masculinity, benefit from the patriarchal system that hegemony upholds and therefore are invested in its continuation and the continuation of the oppression of women, either consciously or unwittingly. Connell refers to this as complicit masculinity (Connell [1995] 1999, 79; Connell and Messerschmidt 2005, 832; Hanlon 2012, 9). Men who are complicit in hegemonic masculinity need not enact domination over women on a personal level, but silence in the face of oppression and violence against women is enough to signal support to such practices (Johnson 2014, 213). Complicity is, therefore, a significant contributor to the continuation of hegemonic masculinity.

As influential as it is, Connell's concept of hegemonic masculinity has also faced a significant amount of criticism on various accounts (Elliott 2016, 245; Hanlon 2012, 10). Hearn (2004, 58) identifies several issues left unaddressed by Connell, such as the vagueness of the definitions of hegemonic masculinity and where its power lies, and how the different dimensions of men's power connect with one another, writing:

> There are also persistent question marks around what is actually to count as hegemonic masculinity. Is it a cultural ideal, cultural images, even fantasy? Is it summed up in the stuff of heroes? Is it toughness, aggressiveness, violence? Or is it corporate respectability? Is it simply heterosexist homophobia? Is it the rather general persistence of patriarchal gender arrangements?

Just as with the concept of masculinity as a whole, there seems to be no strict consensus about what is meant by hegemonic masculinity and who represents it. As Mike Donaldson (1993, 646) points out, the most powerful men in society and those most representative of hegemonic masculinity are certainly not fascist far right male groups that are the most violent and domineering, but rather respected religious, political and cultural influencers. This begs the question: "If the public face of hegemonic masculinity is not necessarily even what powerful men are, then what are they necessarily?" (Donaldson 1993, 653–654). This ambiguity of the dynamics between different masculinities makes the actual root of the power of hegemonic masculinity

near impossible to pinpoint. Therefore, while hegemonic masculinity's categorical dominion over women appears to be in no doubt, the power of some men over other men, supposedly provided by hegemonic masculinity, appears to be harder to concretise (Donaldson 1993, 655).

In addition to the ambiguity of the term, hegemonic masculinity has also been criticised for neglecting boys' and men's agency and subjectivity and its propensity to "disembody men from masculinity" (Waling 2019, 97). According to Andrea Waling (ibid.), "such disembodiments leads to the practice of blaming masculinity for the harmful behaviors men may engage in, removing men's responsibility in these engagements." Masculinity is portrayed as something that is both done *to* men and done *by* men, similarly painting them as victims and perpetrators; blamed for and yet not held accountable for their actions in perpetuating oppressive structures of masculinity (Waling 2019, 10, 102–103). Furthermore, as Anna Buschmeyer and Diana Lengersdorf (2016, 193) point out, Connell's theory does not account for reluctant masculinity, potentially painting all men as complicit to hegemonic masculinity, whether they choose to be so or not.

When applying Connell's theory in the present day, it is also worth questioning how well the theory has managed to keep up with the changing times after a quarter of a century. Ideals of masculinity have shifted significantly since the conception of theory, and even in her more recent work on the subject Connell fails to take this change into account or to demonstrate its impact on the hegemony theory. This, along with the fact that Connell never clearly demonstrates how hegemonic masculinity has changed in the past, calls into the question how fluid and changeable the hegemonic model truly is. However, this should not be taken to mean that the patriarchal structure of society is weakening, but simply that masculinity has become more flexible (Buschmeyer and Lengersdorf 2016, 194–196).

While I agree with much of the criticisms levelled against hegemonic masculinity, I also find it a helpful term when it comes to discussing masculinity on a societal level. I agree with Niall Hanlon (2012, 13), who maintains that hegemonic masculinity is a useful concept, as its "explanation of gender as a social practice represents a theoretically sophisticated way to conceptualise gender, with holding both symbolic and material relations to account for how gender domination operates, and in how gender practices become embodied." Despite its shortcoming and potential pitfalls,

there are still many aspects of Connell's theory that are applicable today and ought not to be discarded without consideration.

In addition to the valid criticisms it has faced, Connell's theory has also been repeatedly oversimplified and misunderstood (Wedgwood 2009, 337). Connell ([1995] 1999, 76) emphasises that hegemonic masculinity it "not a fixed character type", but this is often forgotten when applying the term. As a consequence, hegemonic masculinity is frequently used as shorthand for a very specific and narrow kind of masculinity; a "traditional, macho masculinity characterized by toughness, courage, and muscularity, but also aggressivity, violence, misogyny, homophobia, and other qualities marked as negative in the discourses of other masculinities and feminisms" (Stephens 2002b, ix). The fact that most features commonly attributed to hegemonic masculinity are negative ones, such as excessive violence, oppression of others and suppression of emotion, speaks of the troubling nature of the current cultural landscape that prioritises and glorifies these features, rather than the problematic nature of men or masculinity as a whole. Due to its mobility and contextually fluctuating nature, it is an unwise oversimplification to suggest that traits such as aggression and homophobia are always part of hegemonic masculinity. A more accurate and universally applicable term for such a collection of harmful characteristics would be 'toxic masculinity'.

Kupers (2005, 714) defines toxic masculinity as "the constellation of socially regressive male traits that serve to foster domination, the devaluation of women, homophobia, and wanton violence", which "involves the need to aggressively compete and dominate others and encompasses the most problematic proclivities in men." The purpose of the term is not, as it has at times been interpreted, to suggest all masculinity is toxic, but to identify the attributes of masculinity that are harmful and destructive to women, men themselves, and society at large; attributes that are, in a word, toxic.

These features can be – and in many societies across the United States and Europe presently are – facets of hegemonic masculinity, but hardly the whole extent of it. Since what is considered hegemonic in a certain society today may not be so elsewhere or in the future, trying to come up with a universal meaning for the term goes against its purpose. This also makes it challenging to use as a parameter of analysis. The term 'toxic masculinity' is particularly useful due to the fact that it encompasses the "socially destructive" traits often associated with hegemonic masculinity, such as sexism, violence and the need for domination, but detaches them from the socially

valued traits, such as a sense of pride and the urge to protect and provide for one's family (Kupers 2005, 716). Kupers (ibid.) also identifies subordinated masculinities as defined by Connell's theory, and the alternative modes of masculinity promoted by pro-feminist movements as examples of non-toxic masculinity. However, it is important to note that not all masculinities that are considered subordinate to hegemonic masculinity are necessarily beneficial to women and may, in fact, be just as oppressive (Donaldson 1993, 645).

Despite the important distinction between the two concepts, it would be facetious to suggest there is no connection between toxic masculinity and hegemonic masculinity, as other non-toxic traits, such as empathy, emotional honesty and communication are generally associated with femininity and thus considered inherently subordinate by the standards of hegemonic masculinity. It can therefore be concluded that the two concepts are interlinked and often somewhat overlapping, but not synonymous or interchangeable.

The distinction between the two is crucial for my analysis as I refer to both concepts in this thesis, often alongside each other. For the purposes of this thesis, I use hegemonic masculinity to refer to the prevailing societal modes of masculinity and structures of gendered power, which may vary between societies and communities. Toxic masculinity, on the other hand, is used to refer to a specific type of masculinity that prioritises and glorifies misogyny, racism, violence and suppression of emotion. Additionally, it is worth noting that when analysing *Chaos Walking*, I am working with the hegemonic structures that are present in the societies of its fictional world, which may not be the same as those of real world societies. Therefore the concepts of toxic and hegemonic masculinity may be even more closely linked than they otherwise would be.

2.3 Feminist care ethic

The meaning of care is not easy to define, and indeed there are various schools of thought within the field of moral philosophy alone. The term 'care' may cover a wide range of principles and practices from helping another person meet their everyday needs to parenting, from offering protection and security to offering emotional intimacy (Hanlon 2012, 30; Held 2006, 31). For the purposes of this thesis, however, I mainly

follow Hanlon's (2012, 42) definition of caring as an "emotional relationship" which "involves intimacy, emotional attachments and interdependency, along with feelings of responsibility, which connect us with our vulnerability and basic humanity", or as Pita Bowden ([1997] 2008, 1) phrases it: "Caring expresses ethically significant ways in which we matter to each other, transforming interpersonal relatedness into something beyond ontological necessity or brute survival." I find these definitions to be particularly resonant with the themes of the *Chaos Walking* trilogy, and therefore the most relevant approach to caring for this thesis.

As I approach my topic mainly from the point of view of feminist criticism and masculinity studies, I will not delve too deep into the world of ethics and make no attempt to paint a comprehensive picture of the entire field of moral philosophy. Instead I focus on those aspects of ethical philosophy that have been applied to and found useful in conjunction with feminist theory, the most central of them being the feminist care ethic.

The concept of an ethic of care originated in Gilligan's influential book *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development*, published in 1982 as a critical response to psychologist Lawrence Kohlberg's theories on moral development. Gilligan criticized Kohlberg's interview-based study on morality for its gender bias, as it was based on a sample consisting only of boys and because it considered morality based on care less developed than morality based on justice (Jaffee and Hyde 2000, 703; Tronto 1993, 77; Held 2006, 27). In her own interview-based book Gilligan examines a 'different moral voice' expressed by the women and girls who were interviewed. According to Gilligan, this 'different voice' shows that the women and girls approach moral dilemmas from the perspective of care and responsibility instead of rules and principles (Gilligan [1982] 2001, 73; Sevenhuijsen 1998, 51; Held 2006, 27)

Labelled as the care perspective, this approach prioritises the kind of morality born out of compassion and attentiveness towards others as opposed to the seemingly more objective and impartial "justice perspective" favoured by the likes of Kohlberg and Immanuel Kant (Averill 2012, 166–167). According to Gilligan, due to the gendered divide between the care perspective and the justice perspective – the first being considered typical to women and the latter to men – philosophers and psychologists tend to disregard the care perspective as a way of calling into question women's ability for moral reasoning (Gilligan [1982] 2001, 18; Averill 2012, 168).

Gilligan ([1982] 2001, 73), however, argues that women's approach to morality is not inferior or lacking, but simply different, suggesting that

> Women's construction of the moral problem as a problem of care and responsibility in relationships rather than as one of rights and rules ties the development of their moral thinking to changes in their understanding of responsibility and relationships, just as the conception of morality as justice ties development to the logic of equality and reciprocity.

Gilligan's purpose, then, was to prove that women's abilities for moral reasoning are not inferior to those of men, but that measuring the two perspectives with the same parameters fails to take into account the differences in perspective that stem from the care-based approach favoured by women.

Gilligan's study has been criticised and debated vehemently ever since its publication and it is safe to say that it is no longer considered a reputable piece of academic research and should not be accepted at face value. While much of the criticism came from anti-feminist voices that were unhappy with Gilligan's agenda, there were also legitimate concerns with her study and the conclusions drawn from it (Graham 2012; Sevenhuijsen 1998, 52). Gilligan's study implies that there exists a clear gendered divide between the moral orientations, but this result does not bear out as it has not been successfully replicated by any study conducted since and has instead been disproved several times. Consequently, it cannot be concluded with any certainty that the moral orientation Gilligan attributes to women is related specifically to gender (Tronto 1993, 82; Graham 2012; Jaffee and Hyde 2000, 704). Carol B. Stack (1986, 324) specifically criticised Gilligan's theory for attempting to create a universal model of female morality based on "the moral reasoning of primarily white, middle-class women in the United States" and completely ignoring the effect of intersecting aspects such as race, class and culture on gender as well as morality.

In addition to the academic and scientific shortcomings of Gilligan's study, it has also been criticised for reinforcing essentialist notions of gender, that is, the belief that men and women are inherently different in a fundamental, unchanging way. These critics suggested that Gilligan's essentialist notions of caring reinforced traditional gender roles and were meant to lure women into the "caring trap" and make them return to their traditional domestic roles (Sevenhuijsen 1998, 51; Noddings 2010, 19). As Bowden ([1997] 2008, 8) points out, "celebrations of the 'ethic of care' as the basis of women's moral agency fail to take into account the oppressive conditions in which

many women's practices of caring occur." Therefore, seeing care as something inherently feminine – and seeing women as inherently caring – merely reinforces the patriarchal gender order and confines women to very limited gender roles while justifying this with their different moral substance. However, I agree with Selma Sevenhuijsen (1998, 52), who points out that this reading of Gilligan's work has likely less to do with its actual findings or intentions and more to do with the way they have been interpreted – and possibly misinterpreted – in the discourses of various disciplines.

One of Gilligan's most vocal critics is philosopher Christina Hoff Sommers, who maintains that Gilligan's attempts at bringing about more positive attention to girls, as well as attention to the negative effects of the restricted, patriarchal requirements of masculinity on boys, are not only unfounded and false, but actively harming boys (Sommers 2000, 134, 137). Sommers, a known critic of contemporary feminism, has tackled Gilligan's theories on several occasions to voice her opposing views and concerns. According to Sommers (2000, 128), Gilligan's studies are "a travesty of scientific objectivity," seeking to meddle with the gender identities of boys and girls for the detriment of boys, and Gilligan herself "the theorist who, almost single-handedly, initiated the fashion of thinking about American girls as victimized, silenced Ophelias" (Sommers 2000, 99). In addition to calling into question Gilligan's research methods, Sommers also denies the value of boys and men adopting more stereotypically feminine, caring values, calling attempts at educating and raising boys without gendered distinctions "unacceptably meddlesome, even subtly abusive" (Sommers 2000, 134).

I strongly disagree with Sommers' views on the subject. While the validity of Gilligan's theory is rightly called into question due to its epistemological shortcomings and should certainly be critically examined and applied with caution, Sommers' arguments against it stem from a deeply anti-feminist viewpoint and use the weaknesses of Gilligan's theory to discredit the valid concerns behind it. Sommers herself has been criticised for the same lack of academic rigour of which she accused Gilligan, as her claims on a "war against boys" appear not to be borne out by studies conducted on the subject (Rotundo 2000). E. Anthony Rotundo (ibid.) calls Sommers' arguments "conservative polemic", which "misrepresents scholarly debate, ignores evidence that contradicts her assertions, and directs intense scrutiny at studies she opposes while giving a free critical ride to research she supports." This suggests that while Sommers' criticism does point out some crucial real-world issues that boys face, her determination

to pin these issues on feminism, and Gilligan in particular, would appear to suggest that her concern has less to do with boys and more with recriminating the feminists who seek to address these issues (Rotundo 2000; Kimmel 2010, 93–94). As hooks (2004, 37) points out: "It is patriarchy, in its denial of the full humanity of boys, that threatens the emotional lives of boys, not feminist thinking." As such, the feminist care ethic is, in fact, a powerful tool for addressing the difficulties boys face under the patriarchy.

Despite its shortcomings and ambiguity – or indeed largely thanks to them – Gilligan's study began an important conversation about the role of caring and empathy in moral decisions (Romain 1992, 35). Gilligan's book reached a wide audience, its influence stretching far beyond the academic circles, and was very positively and enthusiastically received by many women who felt that she was making their voices heard in a way they had not been before (Noddings 2010, 18; Held 2006, 28). Whether or not the results Gilligan's study yielded can be considered scientifically valid, the continuing influence her theory has had continuing to the 21st century goes to show that it has resonated deeply with many readers and has made its mark on moral philosophy and feminist theory alike, and should therefore not be entirely overlooked either way. As Sara Jaffee and Janet Shibley Hyde (2000, 721) suggest, the supposed gendered differences in morality are not the most important point of Gilligan's study, and discrediting that particular claim does not necessitate dismissing Gilligan's entire argument. Therefore, while it is important to take into account the limitations of Gilligan's study when utilising it in feminist analysis today – as with any academic theory on gender developed more than three decades ago – it is equally important not to deny its potential advantages.

The crux of the matter is that, whether or not the impetus to care and base one's morality on caring can be considered an inherently feminine trait, it is still the role that many societies foist on women and therefore directly impacts the lives of many. There exists a pervasive double standard in many societies which makes caring and care work an obligation for women even at the expense of their own wellbeing, while men are considered to choose caring of their own volition (Daly 2001b, 48). Thus, any differences in morality may not come down to differences between genders so much as differences between – and within – femininity and masculinity and what is expected of people to whom those categories are applied. Caring in and of itself may not be a specifically feminine trait, but as long as the responsibility and expectation of care both

in personal relationships and work life is placed primarily on women, the gendered nature of care is a feminist issue. Thus, especially for the purposes of this thesis, I am interested specifically in the feminist applications and interpretations of a care ethic rather than attempting to evaluate the moral qualities of different genders.

When it comes to masculinity studies and subverting toxic masculinity, the care ethic approach has a lot to offer. While prioritising care is still more often expected of women than men and acts of care are often coded as feminine, it is not only women who are "engaged in the practice of care" in their private and professional lives (Sevenhuijsen 1998, 81). The relationship between care and masculinity is a conflicted and even contradictory one, as men are, for example, simultaneously considered less masculine for practicing care and yet lauded as remarkable for doing their share of parenting duties (Sevenhuijsen 1998, 81; Elliott 2016, 254). As suggested earlier, the very reason for the dismissal of the care perspective as inferior to the justice perspective has to do with the devaluation of the feminine. Since the formation of hegemonic – and especially toxic – masculinity requires the subjugation of any qualities deemed feminine, the care perspective is viewed as an unsuitable approach to morality for men to adopt. Therefore it follows that men engaging in acts of care and prioritise care over supposedly masculine detachment is subversive and disruptive to toxic masculinity. As Karla Elliott (2016, 254) puts it:

> Caring masculinities are, furthermore, a critical form of men's engagement in gender equality because doing care work requires men to resist hegemonic masculinity and to adopt values and characteristics of care that are antithetical to hegemonic masculinity. [...] Thus, the rejection of domination involved in caring masculinities and the inclusion of care means giving up the privileges and power of hegemonic masculinity and risking social ostracism by not conforming to expected masculine roles.

Actively taking on a more caring and as such supposedly feminine role can therefore be in and of itself a counter-hegemonic act of resistance.

Regardless of the faults and shortcomings of Gilligan's initial study, the feminist care ethic has great value as a tool of dismantling structures of oppression even today. The crux of the matter, according to Lindsay Issow Averill (2012, 169), is that instead of ignoring personal relationships and affections as distractions from objectivity and justice, they ought instead to be regarded as the very foundation of our morality and as such protected and encouraged. Seymour (2016, 631) concurs, writing: "The feminist

care ethic establishes relational accountability, which is often performed by women more so than men, as a moral necessity". While the justice perspective shares with the care perspective the moral baseline that everyone should be treated equally, it fails to address the fact that most of our relationships are based "not on equality but rather on unequal or assymmetrical [sic] relationships of dependency and responsibility" (Averill 2012, 169). To see care as something separate from morality and justice would be to disregard the inevitable influence that personal relationships and social connections have on our policies, principles, and actions. As Elliot (2016, 249) notes when discussing the gendered associations tied to care, "it does not matter if men do not care *about* initially because when men care *for*, they can begin to develop the affective, emotional aspects of care." Virginia Held (2006, 132) concurs, writing:

> Gradually, we can hope, feelings of solidarity will be extended to all persons everywhere, sufficiently to see their rights respected and their needs addressed. But it may be the value of care as much as the value of justice that can help this happen. Unless the presumption of care is met, people seem not to be concerned enough about others to care whether their rights are respected or even recognized.

It is for this reason that feminist care ethic is such a powerful tool for dismantling hegemonic masculinity; learning to care for women and other oppressed groups that do not fit into the hegemony on a personal level opens the doors of possibility to caring about their rights as well.

3   Gender, masculinity and dystopian YA fiction

Dystopia, as defined by M. Keith Booker (2013, 5), is "the subgenre of science fiction that uses its negative portrayal of an alternative society to stimulate new critical insights into real-world societies". Dystopian fiction "foreground[s] the oppressive society in which it is set, using that setting as an opportunity to comment in a critical way on some other society, typically that of the author or audience" (Booker 2013, 3). Dystopias are, therefore, built on societal commentary and criticism, and use imaginary future scenarios as cautionary tales about our present condition.

What, then, separates YA dystopias from the genre at large? The age of the protagonists is naturally a defining characteristic, as YA novels are usually narrated from an adolescent character's viewpoint. A subtler, but equally important difference can be identified in the tone and outlook of the stories. Where adult dystopias are generally rather bleak and pessimistic in their outlook, YA dystopias are allowed a slightly more positive viewpoint. As Ann M. M. Childs (2014, 187) puts it:

> The message of adult dystopia is that this terrible future must be prevented before it is too late, whereas the message in children's dystopia involves the in-text hope that the oppressive regime can be successfully undermined, preparing the readers for whatever flawed world they inherit outside the book.

Antero Garcia (2013, 72) further elaborates: "These protagonists are working from a minority position. It's an endearing message for young people: they embody the capacity to challenge, to lead, to revolutionize." While both the adult and YA branches of dystopia are essentially cautionary tales, the tales oriented at an adolescent audience tend to allow for some hope for a better world, and contain a message of encouragement for their young readers: You, too, can save the world.

In this section I examine the representations of gender and masculinity within the genres of dystopia and Young Adult dystopia, with a particular focus on the role of caring masculinities. First, I consider the role of gender within the genres with an emphasis on masculinity and the subversive potential of YA dystopias for deconstructing gender roles. I then move on to examine the significance of caring in YA dystopias and make a case for the usefulness of the care ethic as a tool for subverting gender conventions in dystopian YA narratives.

3.1 Gender and masculinity in YA dystopia

Booker (2013, 11) has speculated that as dystopian fiction becomes more and more popular, it risks losing its critical power and becoming "mere spectacles of misery that, if anything, simply encourage audiences to feel better about the present". Especially when it comes to YA dystopias, which tend to prioritise characters and plot – and often romance – over the dystopian conditions of the society and more often have happy endings, there is a chance the critical and cautionary aspect that is so crucial in making a dystopia ends up being overlooked or watered down into a mere backdrop (Booker 2013, 14). However, whether they succeed in their wider critical commentary or not, there is no arguing that in one aspect YA dystopias appear to often be particularly revolutionary, that being their treatment of gender roles.

The protagonists of YA dystopias in the current literary trend are overwhelmingly female, and this is no coincidence. As Sara K. Day, Miranda A. Green-Barteet and Amy L. Montz (2014b, 4) write: "[T]he dystopian mode provides girls – who continue to be constructed as passive and weak within much of contemporary Western culture – with the means to challenge the status quo". The purpose of these narratives, then, is to empower girl readers and provide them with role models and examples of rebellious girlhood. It is also noteworthy than the rebellious qualities celebrated in these female heroes are increasingly ones that are rooted in traits stereotypically deemed feminine – and therefore inferior – such as compassion, care, and sensitivity (Trites 1997, 82). Portraying these qualities as aspirational and even revolutionary helps subvert conventional images of gender by reframing femininity as a strength instead of a weakness as it has often been depicted. However, Day, Green-Barteet and Montz (2014b, 5) also point out that the emphasis placed on female characters and the concepts of femininity, which reflects "an ongoing effort on the part of authors, scholars, parents and young women themselves to reconsider and redefine adolescent womanhood", tends to put boys in the backseat. What about adolescent manhood, then?

Gender roles and stereotypes pertaining to boys and masculinity have certainly also received their share of academic interest and attention, but change seems to be slower to come about. As Maria Nikolajeva (2010, 106) points out:

While girls, in reality as well as in literature, have been forced into silent and submissive roles, young males have always had the pressure on them to be strong, aggressive and competitive. Similarly, while real and literary girls have relatively successfully insisted on their right to be strong and independent, the masculine stereotypes turned out to be much more tenacious.

This goes to show that there is a clear disparity between representations of gender non-conformity in girls and boys in literature. YA and children's literature has introduced its readers to a long line of tomboyish girls who have paved the way for the contemporary heroines of YA (Friddle 2016, 119), but there has always been less room for boys to be feminine, owing to the narrow definitions and requirements of masculinity, as examined in section 2.2 earlier. However, this disparity may very well be on its way out.

Just as the dystopian mode gives girls the chance to explore their strengths and courage in ways that the real world may not, it can also provide boys with an equally valuable opportunity to break the mould of gender roles by doing just the opposite. Instead of being represented as "solitary, hyper-masculine figures who avoid caring relationships in order to maintain personal discipline", the male characters in YA dystopias often end up advocating for a different kind of masculinity, placing more value on "emotional availability, non-heteronormativity, and female sexual safety" (Seymour 2016, 628–629). Therefore, just as it has done with girls in the recent years, dystopian YA fiction is now making space for boys to build their gendered identities outside of the limiting confines of traditional roles and expectations. The subversive potential this holds for boys is particularly significant due to the strict gendered hierarchies upheld by hegemonic masculinity, and therefore dystopian YA fiction is also in a uniquely powerful position when it comes to challenging toxic masculinity.

3.2 Feminist care ethic in YA dystopia

As stated above, dystopian YA narratives are generally built on societal criticism and the battle against an oppressive government, which gives authors an opportunity to shift the paradigm in favour of heroes and heroines who do not necessarily fit the normative gender order. Many YA narratives have begun to reframe stereotypically feminine qualities as positive in their female heroines, but it is equally important – and possibly even more subversive – to see such traits portrayed by the male heroes as well. Seymour (2016, 631–632, 646) suggests that by associating selfishness, lack of empathy and

violence with the tyrannical oppressors that the protagonists seek to bring down, they also frame the opposite characteristics – caring, empathy and nurture – as not only positive but actively rebellious features, regardless of the gender of the person embodying them. YA dystopias are therefore excellent tools for exploring and promoting the concept of feminist care ethic.

The link between subverting conventional gender roles and the feminist care ethic is well demonstrated in many YA dystopias. In many dystopian YA narratives, the main characters are put in positions where their survival is contingent on their ability to cooperate and care for the people around them. For the male characters this means letting go of elements of toxic masculinity and embracing more stereotypically feminine traits. Therefore, instead of being presented as lone wolf type solitary heroes, the male characters' heroism is rooted in collaboration and care. According to Seymour (2016, 629), male characters establishing caring connections with the people around them is crucial to the subversion of toxic masculinity:

> The characters develop what I call the "care circle" – a group of characters for whom the male character feels a duty of care. The relationship a male character has with his care circle leads the character to reject the traditionally masculine behavioral indicators typically associated with action-oriented genres.

The formation of a care circle in YA dystopias is not limited to male characters, naturally, as demonstrated by Averill in her examination of Katniss in *The Hunger Games*, but as the ethic of care is widely – albeit somewhat incorrectly – considered a feminine moral perspective, seeing it expressed through male characters is rarer and more subversive. However, considering that in many of the dystopian worlds of YA fiction, the reigning philosophy is often that of totalitarian individualism that explicitly promotes prioritising one's own survival over others, choosing to make care and protection of others a moral imperative becomes revolutionary regardless of gender (Seymour 2016, 631–632).

4 Masculinity and society in *Chaos Walking*

The *Chaos Walking* trilogy is mostly narrated from Todd's point of view. In *Knife* he is the sole narrator, while in *Ask* the narration is split between him and Viola, and in *Monsters* split further between him, Viola and a member of the alien species called the Land. Therefore, especially in *Knife*, Todd is largely responsible for what information is given to the reader and how the reader's understanding of the book's world and society is constructed. In the beginning of the story, Todd is deeply concerned with the idea of masculinity and performing the right kind of masculinity. Todd's definitions of masculinity are constructed by the society he lives in and these definitions then, in turn, influence how Todd sees the world and interacts with it. As Patricia Hill Collins (2004, 186) points out,

> hegemonic masculinity is a concept that is shaped by ideologies of gender, age, class, sexuality, and race. Ideas about groups formed within these ideologies, for example, women or LGBT people, constitute an important benchmark for defining a hegemonic masculinity that must constantly construct itself. Without these groups as ideological markers, hegemonic masculinity becomes meaningless.

Therefore, how Todd and the people around him view, for example, women and girls, aliens, and men from other towns and of other social classes defines how he views himself and how he constructs the modes of masculinity he seeks to emulate.

Todd's need to reconcile his identity with the expectations and demands of his society is the driving force of his whole journey. Todd's inability to conform to the mode of masculinity of Prentisstown leads to him being ostracized and even hunted by the other men due to the Mayor's obsession with transforming the last boy in Prentisstown into a man on his terms. Todd is initially eager to fit in within his community and, despite fleeing Prentisstown, still subscribes to their beliefs about masculinity. Throughout the story, however, Todd goes on to construct a version of masculinity that is not built on the same toxic elements as the one he sought to emulate in the beginning. As he learns to care about those around him and overcome his fears and prejudices, he is able to construct a more stable and non-toxic mode of masculinity that does not rely on the oppression or domination of others. Essentially, Todd's mode of masculinity ends up being influenced and enriched by people of different genders, sexualities and races, instead of being formed in contrast and opposition with them.

Despite Todd being the focal point and the narrator of the story, in this section I will examine the larger patterns of hegemonic and toxic masculinity existing in the world of the series, not merely those expressed or actively examined by Todd. Though most of what is shown of the world is filtered through Todd's narration and is therefore part of his perception of the world, his world view is also contested and contrasted by other characters, which is why I will also be looking at the forms of masculinity embodied by Ben, the Mayor, Davy Prentiss Jr., and others male characters. Especially the parallels and opposites shown to exist between Todd and Davy are extremely enlightening when it comes to the hegemonic masculinity of Prentisstown and its effects on boys' personalities and behaviours, which is why Davy's character, in particular will be closely examined.

In this section, I explore the structures of patriarchal oppression on New World as seen through Todd's eyes. First I delve into the gender roles and attitudes towards women, ranging from gendered labour divides to prejudiced attitudes and sexual violence. The treatment of women is key in the formation of different masculinities, and therefore paramount when addressing toxic masculinity. Secondly, I address themes of racism and xenophobia through the treatment of the alien race, the Land, in *Chaos Walking*. The Land are the native inhabitants of the planet and face intense prejudices and aggression from the human settlers, Todd included. I examine how Todd's masculinity – and the hegemonic masculinities of New World societies in general – is influenced by the xenophobic fear and hatred of the Land.

4.1 Gender roles and stereotypes

When discussing hegemonic masculinity, gender and gendered attributes are naturally in the heart of the matter. As Connell ([1995] 1999, 68) puts it:

> [T]he concept is also inherently relational. 'Masculinity' does not exist except in contrast with 'femininity'. A culture which does not treat women and men as bearers of polarized character types, at least in principle, does not have a concept of masculinity in the sense of modern European/American culture.

If social concepts such as masculinity and femininity find their meaning in contrast with each other, it must also follow that for one to be valued as superior, the other must be made inferior. Therefore in order for masculinity to be the superior and dominant mode

of gender in a society, femininity must be made subordinate. The way this is done is through strict gender roles and divisions of labour, gendered violence and various other forms of misogyny, all of which are present in *Chaos Walking*.

Todd's understanding of gender and gender roles has been twisted by lack of information and, indeed, the very concrete lack of women in his society, as all the women of Prentisstown were killed when Todd was a baby. Todd forms his image of girls and women through what he has seen in educational videos, later banned, and in the minds of the men around him:

> I've never seen a woman nor a Spackle in the flesh, obviously, I've seen 'em both in vids, of course, before they were outlawed, and I see them *all the time* in the Noise of men cuz what else do men think about except sex and enemies? But the spacks are bigger and meaner looking in the Noise than in the vids, ain't they? And Noise women have lighter hair and bigger chests and wear less clothes and are a lot freer with their affecshuns than in the vids, too.
> (*Knife* 22–23, spelling and emphasis as in the original)

Already Todd paints a less than flattering picture of the men in his town and their attitudes towards women. The way Todd sees it – and he literally has access to the thoughts of the other men around him – men are defined primarily by their penchant for sex and violence. The contrast between the conservative educational tapes and men's lewd imaginations allows Todd to take both accounts with a grain of salt, but neither source of information does much to help him form a realistic image of women. Same goes for the concept of girls:

> Girls are small and polite and smiley. They wear dresses and their hair is long and it's pulled into shapes behind their heads or on either side. They do all the inside-the-house chores, while boys do all the outside. They reach womanhood when they turn thirteen, just like boys reach manhood, and then they're women and they become wives. That's how New World works, or at least that's how Prentisstown works.
> (*Knife* 68)

Todd readily accepts this as fact and does not question the gendered structures he has been taught. Despite the fact that he has no memory of living in a community with women, he is aware of what their role in it would – and ought to – be; domestic, submissive and intrinsically linked to their relationship with men. Todd's picture of what women and girls are is quite literally painted by men – and in particular men whose memories have been twisted by grief and their own guilt over what they did to

the women. This makes for a very limited idea of femininity, which is why Todd is surprised when she encounters Viola, the first female human he ever remembers seeing:

> Her hair ain't long. And she ain't wearing no dress, she's wearing clothes that look like way newer versions of mine, so new they're almost like a uniform, even tho they're torn and muddy, and she ain't that small, she's my size, just, by the looks of her, and she's sure as all that's unholy not smiley.
>
> (*Knife* 69)

Considering the narrow and stereotypical image of girlhood Todd had been raised to believe, it is little wonder that meeting a real live girl shakes his preconceptions.

Due to his background, Todd could easily be expected to behave in a deeply misogynistic manner towards the first woman he has ever met. It is therefore significant that despite his limited knowledge and biases, Todd does not act particularly domineering or condescending towards Viola and does not underestimate her because of her gender. Todd does act somewhat hostile, pointing his knife at her, but the hostility is born out of his fear of Viola and the strange world she represents rather than resentment of her gender as such. Because of Todd's defensive behaviour, Viola clubs him with a branch the first chance she gets and subsequently gets cut when Todd swings his knife at her. Despite this rather violent start to their acquaintance, Todd immediately heals Viola's injuries and saves her from the attacks of Aaron, the priest who is determined to kill Viola as a sacrifice. Therefore, by the end of their very first encounter, it has been established that Viola is neither weak nor passive and Todd is capable of care and compassion towards a stranger whom he fears and does not understand. This sets up the dynamic of reciprocal care and protection that exists between Todd and Viola throughout the trilogy.

It could even be argued that the lack of women in Todd's community is beneficial to his attitudes towards them. In the absence of women the men have romanticised – as well as sexualised and fetishised – them while simultaneously twisting their own memories to erase the male violence that led to their eradication in the first place. Todd has never seen a woman living in the toxic society he grew up in and thus he has no behavioural patterns of male dominance and sexist violence to emulate. He knows women are supposed to be domestic and submissive, but he has not witnessed women actually being so and therefore does not expect it of Viola. Additionally, even if Todd has heard derogatory remarks about women from other men,

he never repeats any of them to Viola or any other woman he comes across on his journey.

Todd's lack of knowledge and experience with women does, however, still colour his attitude and behaviour. While he does not behave in outwardly misogynistic manner, Todd is occasionally insensitive in the way he thinks and talks to and about Viola. However, most of his thoughtless remarks are born out of his discomfort with Viola's lack of Noise rather than any actual gendered traits or behaviour – although it could be argued that the apparently gendered division of the Noise does, in fact, make it a gendered trait in itself – and are expressed only through Todd's thoughts, which he cannot prevent Viola from hearing. For the first few days of Todd and Viola's journey, Viola refuses to speak to Todd and since women emit no Noise, Todd has no access to her thoughts or feelings, which is just as distressing to him as hearing his thoughts is to her. As Todd learns later on, this was a significant factor in the murder of all women in Prentisstown; men could not accept the fact that they could not hear women's thoughts when women could hear theirs; they "couldn't stand women knowing everything about them and them knowing nothing about women" (*Knife* 392). Todd comes face to face with this frustration as well early on in his journey with Viola as he becomes increasingly distressed over her silence, but he ends up reacting very differently:

> "You're NOTHING!" I scream, stepping forward some more. "NOTHING! You're nothing but EMPTINESS! There's nothing in you! You're EMPTY and NOTHING and we're gonna die FOR NOTHING!" I have my fists clenched so hard my nails are cutting into my palms. I'm so furious, my Noise raging so loud, so *red*, that I have to raise my fists to her, I have to hit her, I have to beat her, I have to make her ruddy silence STOP before it SWALLOWS ME AND THE WHOLE EFFING WORLD! I take my fist and punch myself hard in the face.
>
> (*Knife* 123)

Todd comes very close to giving in to the same violent urge that spelled the doom of all the women in Prentisstown, but instead he ends up redirecting the violence away from Viola and inflicting it on himself. This choice, made in a moment of anger and frustration, already sets Todd apart from the culture of toxic masculinity he grew up in, and sets him on the course of subversive masculinity, which evolves further as the story advances.

Despite what Todd has been raised to believe, Prentisstown is not the only human settlement on New World. As Todd travels further, he discovers different

societies and begins to realise that the picture of manhood he has accepted to be the norm may not be the only one – or the right one – after all. In the settler city of Farbranch Todd sees how differently a society can operate, thinking: "tho men and women both do the heavy labour, women give more orders that more men follow. And with Francia being Deputy Mayor and Hildy being whoever she is in Farbranch, I'm beginning to think it's a town run by women" (*Knife* 191–192). In addition to realising women can be leaders and in positions of power over men, Todd notices that the men are different as well:

> It's all so, I don't even know, *calm*. Like normal chatter you'd have with yer mates. Nothing accidental or abusive. And nobody's hardly longing for nothing. No awful, awful, despairing longing nowhere I can hear or feel.
> (*Knife* 171–172, emphasis as in original)

> Men's Noise here, too, is a *lot* more controlled than what I'm used to. With so many women around and from what I know of the Noise of Prentisstown you'd think the sky would be full of Noisy women with no clothes doing the most remarkable things you could think of. And sure you hear that sometimes here, men are men after all, but more of the time it's songs or it's prayers or it's directed to the work at hand.
> (*Knife* 192, emphasis as in the original)

Todd still seems to think that fantasies of women are somehow an essential part of masculinity, but in Farbranch he comes to understand that men are capable of other thoughts as well and that the mere existence of women does not necessitate that men be thinking about them – and specifically sex with them – constantly. Farbranch has found a way to make their society function without relying on the oppression of women, but it quickly becomes apparent that Farbranch is an outlier.

A stark contrast to Farbranch is created in the settlement of Carbonel Downs, where Todd and Viola seek refuge later on. While the people of Carbonel Downs have not resorted to the extreme measures of Prentisstown, the role assigned to women is very similar to what Todd remembers having seen in the educational videos back home; domestic and submissive. As Viola describes it: "'Oh, there's women,' she says, fiddling with a butter knife. 'They clean and they cook and they make babies and they all live in a big dormitory outside of town where they can't interfere in men's business'" (*Knife* 362).

In addition to the separation of genders – both in terms of habitation as well as labour and other duties – the men of Carbonel Downs also display clear signs of

misogyny and derision towards women. Viola describes the way she was received when she tried to warn them about the approaching army: "They wouldn't listen to me. Not one thing. Not a word I said about the army. They kept calling me *little girl* and practically patting me on the bloody head" (*Knife* 363, emphasis as in the original). Later, when they meet the town's eldermen – an all-male group of leaders – their reactions to anything Viola says are more or less the same, saying such things as "Can't trust the word of a woman", "Shut up, girl" and "Now's not really the time for women to be talking, Vi" (*Knife* 379, 382). The men of Carbonel Downs do not necessarily act violent or abusive towards women, but the casual disregard of women and their opinions is a manifestation of misogyny and toxic masculinity all the same.

Considering the resemblance between the gender orders of Carbonel Downs and Prentisstown, had Todd adopted the ideologies of the society he grew up in, he would likely accept this order of things without protest. But as established earlier, Todd has managed to avoid the toxic patterns enforced by most of his fellow townsmen and, furthermore, having come in contact with actual women, has grown to respect them as equals. Additionally, by this point of the story Todd and Viola have formed a strong alliance, which compels Todd to immediately call into question the prejudices and the condescension the men of Carbonel Downs express towards Viola. When Todd is called to meet the eldermen, he insists that Viola come along even though women are not allowed, and later, when one of the eldermen refers to Viola as Todd's girl, his response is indignant and immediate:

> "She ain't my girl," I say, low.
> "What?" Doctor Snow says.
> "What?" Viola says.
> "She's her own girl," I say. "She don't belong to anyone."
> And does Viola ever *look* at me.
>   (*Knife* 380, emphasis as in the original)

Even Viola seems surprised by Todd's statement. By openly defying and rejecting the sexist assumptions foisted on Viola and their relationship, Todd sets himself apart from the hegemonic masculinity of their community and makes it known that he does not agree with it and will not be complicit in perpetuating it. It is apparent that Todd's urges to call out misogynistic treatment of women and oppose the patriarchal rules is not born out of some innate sense of justice, but directly from his close, caring connection with

Viola. Caring *for* Viola has essentially turned into caring *about* the injustices women face on New World.

Whether the gendered divide of labour and the general attitude towards women in Carbonel Downs are a consequence of the Noise – and women's lack thereof – or simply an example of a conservative society with a very strong patriarchal order is left unclear, but the result remains the same. The ambiguity also serves as a necessary reminder that the structures of oppression on New World are not necessarily the cause of some alien abnormality skewing the social order, but could just as easily be manifestations of patriarchal paradigms carried over from Old World. In fact, later on in the series it is made apparent that conservative gender roles are not just specific to certain cities or communities, but indeed the cultural norm of New World as a whole. When Viola wakes up in Haven at the beginning of *Ask*, she questions Mistress Coyle, the healer who saved her:

> "So you're a doctor, then?" […]
> "No, my girl," she says, cocking her head. "As I'm sure you know, there are no women doctors on New World. I'm a healer."
> "What's the difference?"
> She runs her fingers across her brow again. "What's the difference indeed?"
>
> (*Ask* 74)

Later, Mistress Coyle notes that "no girl from New World would ever ask a woman if she was a doctor" (*Ask* 75), which drives home the point that Viola comes from an entirely different and a far more progressive background whereas New World is patriarchal to its core. This could be understood to signify that Old World has in fact progressed past New World in the time since the first settlers' journey – a possibility supported by the fact that the journey from one planet to the other takes decades – or New World regressed as a reaction to the Noise. However, it might also simply suggest that the miniature society on Viola's ship was unusually progressive, as Viola was born on the spaceship and never actually lived on Old World. It is also noteworthy that unlike the mission that brought Todd's parents' generation to the planet, Viola's convoy was not a religious mission. The pervasive role of strict Christian values and morality as enforced by the maniacal preacher, Aaron, should not be ignored when analysing the hegemony of Prentisstown and much of New World. Regardless, Viola, unlike the children born on New World, has not been taught to take rigid gender roles and occupational divides for granted. Unlike Todd, who has lived there all his life, Viola

sees the injustices of New World for what they are, and her perspective helps Todd begin to view them critically as well.

Viola's confusion about female doctors on New World also highlights the gendered attitudes attached to care work. As an apprentice healer tells Viola: "Mistress Coyle is the best healer in all of Haven, better than any of those so-called *doctors* they've got in this town. Even the bad guys know that. Why do you think they brought you here instead of a clinic?" (*Ask* 77, emphasis as in the original). There is a clear difference in prestige between healers and doctors, and no matter how skilled a woman is at healing, she cannot earn the title of doctor. Eventually Mistress Coyle does give an answer to Viola's question about the differences between healers and doctors:

> "The difference between a clinic and a house of healing?" Mistress Coyle asks, ticking off boxes on a sheet.
> "The main difference is that clinics are run by male doctors, houses of healing by female healers," I recite, as I count out the day's pills into separate little cups for each patient.
> "And why is that?"
> "So that a patient, male or female, can have a choice between knowing the thoughts of their doctor or not."
> She raises an eyebrow. "And the real reason?"
> "Politics," I say, returning her word.
> "Correct."
>
> (*Ask* 106)

This suggests that the Noise plays a role in the formation of stricter gender roles and the gendered division of care work on New World, but Mistress Coyle clearly implies that it is more an excuse than a legitimate reason. This also plays into the gendered nature of care work, which mandates that, as care work is generally done by women and thus been coded as feminine in and of itself, it is also inherently counter-hegemonic and therefore unsuitable for men (Hanlon 2012, 63). As such, the divide between esteemed male doctors and less prestigious female healers speaks to the gendered expectations of care and who performs it; women are assumed to do care work, but the respected positions within the field still belong to men.

When it comes to pervasive social constructions such as gender roles, it may seem like caring relationships between individuals may have very little effect on them or power to change them. However, while individual people and their relationship dynamics may not have direct effect on social structures, personal caring is not necessarily disconnected from political action. Valuing care simply as it applies to the

private sphere is myopic, as it neglects to take into account the role of caring in building communities and societies at large. Just as justice needs to exist in the private sphere to guarantee the rights of individuals within personal relationships, for example, care needs to be brought into the economic and political sphere. That is to say, to quote Held (2006, 134): "There can be care without justice, but there can be no justice without the care that has value." As Held (2006, 137) further suggests:

> Rights, I have argued, presume a background of social connectedness. The most appropriate basis for such connectedness or solidarity is the caring that has value. At the very least, human beings can and ought to care enough about other human beings to sustain the relations between them within which rights can be respected.

Therefore, men learning to care for and about women – and other people in general – can lead to advances in gender equality on a much wider scale.

Todd rising to Viola's defence against the eldermen of Carbonel Downs may not directly impact their attitudes or behaviour, but Todd's refusal to be complicit in their misogynistic customs is still an act of rebellion against the hegemonic gender order they promote. This goes to show that Todd, after only a relatively brief friendship with a girl, is beginning to change his views on women and gender roles in general. It is significant that the change in his perspective manifests not only as shifts in thinking, but as direct action, prompting him to stand up against other men whose attitudes towards women he can no longer accept or tolerate. For Todd, therefore, beginning to care for and about women and the injustices they face on a societal level is directly tied to a decrease in his toxic attitudes towards them and this caring compels him to oppose behaviours born of toxic masculinity in other men as well. This naturally also impacts his thoughts and behaviours when it comes to sexuality and sexual violence, which are addressed in the next section.

4.2 Gendered violence and the objectification of women

Gender roles and expectations are naturally not the only way in which toxic masculinity's disdain towards women manifests. In its most extreme forms, misogyny and toxic masculinity are expressed through gendered violence – men's violence against women – and often specifically as sexual violence and rape. This violence is also

closely linked with the sexualisation and objectification of women. All of themes are present in the world of *Chaos Walking*.

Seymour (2016, 642) suggests that there is a very simple litmus test for finding out who is supposed to be the good guy in a YA dystopia:

> In YA dystopia, there is one way to tell, definitively, whether a character is meant to be sympathetic: how they approach women. If a character is portrayed threatening, assaulting, or objectifying a female, the character is immediately identifiable as one to be feared and hated.

It is undoubtedly for this reason that Todd, being the main character, portrays none of the misogynistic attitudes that seem to run rampant in his world. He struggles with the requirements of toxic masculinity seemingly because he is innately different from the antagonists of the story. Viola says as much when Todd intends to kill Davy Prentiss Jr., stating that "before I even understood what was going on with the Noise and with Prentisstown and with whatever your story was, I could tell about you. People can tell, Todd. We can see that you won't hurt us. That that's not you" (*Knife* 264). By saying this, Viola is not only reassuring Todd, but also assuring the implied reader that Todd does not present a threat to the women in the story and thus establishing him as a 'good guy'. Todd's morality is later put to the test in *Ask*, but his confirmed harmlessness when it comes to sexual violence remains an indisputable fact of his character.

In this sense Todd's character is set in direct contrast with Davy Prentiss Jr., son of the Mayor of Prentisstown, who is openly misogynistic and enjoys exploiting his power to do violence. Davy starts out as the sheriff of Prentisstown and later serves as a soldier for his father. In *Knife* he is one of the main antagonists, but in *Ask* he and Todd become somewhat reluctant comrades under the Mayor's rule. Davy is both the closest point of comparison with Todd as well as a contrasting character, as they are close in age and both grew up in Prentisstown. Therefore the differences in their personalities effectively bring out the differences in the modes of masculinity they represent.

Overall, Davy is the one character who sexualises and objectifies women the most in the story. In *Knife*, when Todd gets captured by Davy, he taunts Todd about his relationship with Viola and lets Todd know his personal viewpoint on women:

> "But that's the lesson you learn, eh? Dogs is dogs and women turn out to be dogs, too." [...] "What you do, Todd," he says, squatting down to get closer to me, "is you keep the ones that're whores and you shoot the ones that're not."

[…] "After I tie you up," he says, turning it into a whispering taunt, "I'll go find yer little lady and let you know which kind she is."

(*Knife* 256–257)

In many ways, Davy represents the kind of violent, sexist and oppressive masculinity that the term 'toxic masculinity' is generally applied to, in many ways even more so than his father, the Mayor, who is presented as the main antagonist of the story. Davy calls women bitches and whores on several occasions, happily tortures imprisoned members of the Land and generally enjoys having power over others. He also places a great deal of emphasis on the significance of sexual activity – and sexual violence – as essential aspects of masculinity.

In general, the role of sex in the formation of hegemonic masculinity is addressed very little in *Chaos Walking* compared to the role of violence and killing. This is likely a conscious decision with regard to the intended age of the readers as well as the age of the adolescent characters. However, Davy's speech and behaviour still present sex as a significant rite of passage to manhood, and whether or not Todd agrees, the implication still speaks volumes of the society they grew up in. When Davy captures Todd in *Knife* and taunts him about Viola, he also makes a point of ridiculing his sexual inexperience, saying: "Poor, poor Toddy. All this time travelling with a woman and I'm guessing you never figured out what to do with one" (*Knife* 256). Additionally, later in *Ask* when Davy is speculating on the reward the Mayor might give them for their good work, his thoughts are along the same lines: "'Maybe the reward is women!' Davy says suddenly. 'Yeah! Maybe he's gonna give us some women and finally make a real man outta you'" (*Ask* 284). In the first instance Todd reacts angrily to Davy's jeers and soon attacks him physically, although partly due to having been captured by him and trying to escape. In *Ask*, however, Todd, despite quickly shutting down the conversation, does not go out of his way to object to Davy's statement or reprimand him for it either.

It is also worth noting that, having grown up in the same womanless town Todd did and being only two years his senior, Davy cannot possibly have had any sexual encounters with a woman either. Rather, Davy's boasts are merely a tool of establishing masculinity by degrading women and any traits associated with femininity. As Hanlon (2012, 62) states: "Men's anxieties about subordination find expression within all male groups as homophobia and misogyny". Davy is desperate to prove his masculinity in front of his father and peers, and the way to do this is by boasting his sexual prowess and simultaneously degrading women through misogynistic jokes and hate speech.

Studies conducted on boys in fraternities suggest that this is not unusual as far as male bonding strategies go. Peter Lyman ([1987] 1998, 173), in his article on male bonding in fraternities, states:

> The humor of male bonding relationships generally is sexual and aggressive, and frequently consists of sexist or racist jokes. […] The jokes that men tell about women in the presence of other men are sexual and aggressive rather than erotic and use hostile rather than clever verbal forms; and, [...] have the creation of male group bonding as their purpose. [...] The guys used the joking relationship to negotiate the tension they felt between sexual interest in the girls and fear of commitment to them. The guys [...] used hostile joking to negotiate their fear of the "loss of control" implied by intimacy.

Davy's behaviour around Todd mirrors these very patterns. Davy deflects his anxieties about women and his confusion at Todd's close relationship with Viola by making crude comments about her and women in general every chance he gets. His speech and conduct towards the Land are also very aggressive and hostile. The role of racism and xenophobia in Todd and Davy's masculinities is further examined in section 4.3.

It speaks volumes of the culture Davy grew up in that he continues making sexist and objectifying remarks in Todd's presence even after they become friends and the remarks are no longer meant to provoke and taunt him. As Sharon R. Bird (1996, 128) notes, objectifying women, competing for their attentions and boasting about one's conquests is a staple of homosocial interactions meant to maintain hegemonic masculinity. Although Todd never engages in these conversations with Davy, it is still clear that comments about women and sex are Davy's way of attempting to establish his masculinity in the presence of Todd and, in doing so, connecting with him. Much of the speech and behaviour men exhibit to each other is seen as performative, seeing men as "locked into presenting themselves in accordance with the collectively defined notion of desirable and acceptable masculinity", often at the expense of expressing vulnerability or any behaviour that could be interpreted as weakness (Thurnell-Read 2012, 254). That is not to say that no intimacy or connection can exist between men, but for Davy this performative approach seems to be the only approach to friendship he knows. Therefore, instead of allowing himself to be open with Todd about his anxieties, Davy chooses to follow the script of male bonding that seeks to build connections by performing masculinity through sexist oppression. Davy gives very little thought to the women he is talking about, portraying them more as tools for their pleasure than actual human beings:

> "Well, we're officers now, ain't we, brother? It's my understanding officers get *privileges*." He looks over at me sideways, his Noise bright as a flare, filled with things I used to see all the time in old Prentisstown. Pictures of women with no clothes. I frown and send him back a picture of a woman with no clothes and a band on her arm.
> "So?" Davy says.
> "Yer sick."
>
> <div align="right">(Ask 383, emphasis as in the original)</div>

Davy is essentially suggesting sex – or rather, rape, as he is clearly alluding to the sexual violence perpetrated by the other soldiers – as a way to celebrate their promotions and as a bonding activity as newly proclaimed "brothers". Davy appears callous, but he is not completely insensitive to the women's suffering. In fact, he has a much harder time carrying out the torture of the women than Todd, who has by this point suppressed his emotions to the point of near complete apathy. I address Todd and Davy's emotional expression further in section 5.2. Regardless, this goes to show that despite his awareness of the women's suffering, in moments of happiness and excitement he reverts back to viewing them as objects of sexual activity and is not swayed even by Todd's direct reminder of the torture they've inflicted on the women.

Davy's understanding of the relationship between men and women is sexist and rather straightforward; he views women as objects of desire and sexual activity, and does not appear to think it possible for a man and a woman to share an equal, intimate friendship that is not contingent on sexual relations. In *Ask*, when Todd agonises over Viola's disappearance and worries about her, Davy cannot understand why:

> "Jesus, pigpiss." Davy spits again. "It's not like any of the *rest* of us got girlfriends. They're all in ruddy *jail* or setting off bombs every week or walking around in groups so big you can't even talk to 'em."
> "She ain't my girlfriend," I say.
> "Not the point," he says. "All I mean is that yer just as alone as the rest of us, so get over it."
>
> <div align="right">(Ask 262, emphases as in the original)</div>

Davy is shown to be frustrated that all the women are imprisoned or escaped, and under strict surveillance, but his frustration stems not from indignation at the injustice, but rather from the notion that this state of things robs him of any possible female companionship. He cannot understand Todd's anxiety over Viola's absence, because he himself has never experienced such a close relationship with a woman. Therefore, while much of Davy's disdain towards women has to do with his upbringing and the toxic

culture of Prentisstown, the crux of Davy's complaints appears to be that he is lonely. Yet instead of considering the possibility of seeking out close relationships with his fellow men – outside of his fledgling and not particularly reciprocated friendship with Todd – he thinks his loneliness would be cured by getting to be with a woman. This is deeply symptomatic of toxic masculinity and the patriarchal order, which relies on the alienation of men from both women and other men. When men are left alone with their confusion and anxieties about their masculinity, they are more likely to end up complicit in upholding the very same patriarchal structures that keep them isolated and alienated (Kaufman 1994, 151). Consequently, the expectation and responsibility of caring for men – both emotionally and often practically – falls to women. Davy feels entitled to the attention and care of women and, being denied this, turns to derogatory speech and acts of bravado in order to establish his masculinity.

The pattern of establishing masculinity through misogyny is also in line with studies on rape, which suggest that rape is often committed not as an expression of men's power, but rather out of men's feelings of powerlessness and inferiority, which is then redirected at those less powerful than them (Kaufman [1987] 1998, 9; Kimmel 2005, 189–190, 228). As Michael S. Kimmel (2005, 189) puts it: "It's less a crime of passion than a crime of power, less about love or lust than about conquest and contempt, less an expression of longing than an expression of entitlement". While Davy himself is never shown to commit rape – as that would make his character irredeemable by the standards suggested by Seymour – he threatens rape to Viola and more specifically threatens Todd with the rape of Viola. It is noteworthy that, more so than using the threat of rape as a tool against Viola herself, it is a tool against Todd and his masculinity, as if Viola were Todd's possession instead of a person in her own right, as she largely is from Davy's perspective.

Davy's speech and behaviour towards women is also contingent on his relationship with his father, Mayor Prentiss. The Mayor's words and actions are often in direct contradiction when it comes to the treatment of women. He often reprimands his son for his misogynist speech – although arguably only to manipulate Todd who is often witness to Davy's outbursts as they work together in *Ask*. Both when discussing the separation of men and women in Haven and later after a female group of freedom fighters blow up part of the city, Davy speaks of the women in derogatory terms and is admonished by his father:

"You put the bitches in their place," Davy sneers.

"You will not speak that way in front of me, David," the Mayor says, calmly but in a voice that ain't joking. "Women will be respected at all times and given every comfort."

(*Ask* 50)

"Want me to go hunting fo 'em, Pa?" Davy says. "The bitches who did this?"

"Mind your language," the Mayor says.

(*Ask* 160)

By scolding Davy for his sexist language he distances himself from these kinds of displays of open misogyny, choosing instead to portray himself as more progressive and egalitarian a man and a leader. However, it is apparent that on both of these occasions Davy says what he says in an attempt to please his father and gain his approval, which in turn suggests that he is projecting attitudes he has been raised to believe, if not by the Mayor directly then by the other men of Prentisstown. This also indicates that he has reason to assume such speech will be positively received. Despite his apparent disapproval of sexist language, Davy's behaviour makes it clear that the Mayor has not made any efforts to raise Davy to respect women either.

In addition, the Mayor's assurances of respect towards women do nothing to prevent him from branding and torturing them and framing them as terrorists for his own political benefit. It could well be argued that this kind of calculated and veiled political maliciousness towards women, when manifested in a man in a position of great power, is far more dangerous than sexist outbursts of name-calling and violence committed by men with less power. Indeed, the fact that the Mayor's behaviour is often very divorced from the stereotypical idea of toxic masculinity does not mean he is not party to the structures of hegemonic masculinity in the society he lives in; on the contrary. As Connell ([1995] 1999, 77) suggests, the individuals who most strongly embody hegemonic masculinity are not necessarily the ones with the most power and vice versa. Therefore, the Mayor himself does not need to resort to violent acts of toxic masculinity to maintain his power. Instead his power comes from the men who support him and under his command are willing to commit such acts on his behalf.

Many of the Mayor's military leaders, such as Mr Hammar and Ivan Farrow, are violent and power-hungry by nature, and the Mayor exploits their toxic attitudes by either siding with them or condemning them, depending on how he wants to be perceived by the people around him and how it suits his agenda. Just as with Davy, the

Mayor reacts dismissively when Mr Hammar refers to the bombers as bitches, retorting: "Your analysis was not asked for, Sergeant" (*Ask* 239). However, Hammar is his Sergeant, later promoted to Captain, despite having murdered an innocent woman; a crime for which the Mayor told Viola he would have him hanged. Again, just as with Davy it becomes apparent that even though the Mayor himself does not necessarily behave or speak out in a misogynist manner, he has no qualms about siding with such men and taking advantage of their hostile attitudes and behaviours. He may not be the one directly hurting the women, but he is the one who confines and imprisons them and sends violent, misogynistic men to interrogate and guard them, thus making it possible for these acts of misogynistic violence to happen in the first place.

The rest of the Mayor's men do indeed commit acts of misogynistic violence and even rape, but Todd is not there to witness and narrate most of it and is therefore not given a chance to react to them directly. Todd is aware that women imprisoned by the Mayor and his men are being raped or otherwise sexually assaulted: "We hear stories about soldiers and women, stories about soldiers getting into dormitories at night, stories about awful things going on that no one gets punished for" (*Ask* 285). Similarly, when Lee, a male member of the mostly-female resistance group called the Answer, is taking Viola to save Todd by pretending to be keeping her prisoner, Viola notes: "He broadcast as loud as he could that I was his prisoner on the way here, so loud other soldiers thought he was covering up for a rape he was going to commit and whistled him good luck as we passed" (*Ask* 390). It is impossible to say how much of the soldiers' behaviour is born out of hatred of women and how much is born simply out of a need to perform masculinity in a socially accepted way, but in the end it makes little difference as long as the result is the same. This also goes to show that it is entirely possible for decent men to become violently misogynistic when given the opportunity to do so without repercussions.

Throughout *Ask*, the Mayor uses women as a tool for manipulating the men of Haven, or as he names it, New Prentisstown. Women are portrayed as victims and used as bargaining tools when he wants to win the favour of the men and as a violent threat when he wants the men's support for their subordination. This tactic proves successful and the Mayor is quite easily able to persuade the men to side with him. Despite having borne witness to the atrocities done to their wives, mothers and daughters, the men are

later quick to accept the Mayor's assurances that all women should be treated as terrorists and painfully branded to keep them in check:

> "You want us to number *all* the women," Davy says again, quietly, looking away from his pa.
> "I've said it before," the Mayor sighs. "*Every* woman is part of the Answer, if only because she is a woman and therefore sympathetic to other women." […]
> "They'll resist [...]. The men won't like it neither."
> "Ah, yes" says the Mayor. "You missed yesterday's rally, didn't you?" […]
> "I spoke to the men of New Prentisstown," the Mayor says. "Man to man. I explained to them the threat the Answer poses us and how this is the next prudent step forward to ensure safety for all. […] I encountered no resistance."
> "There weren't no women at this rally," I say, "were there?"
> He turns to me. "I wouldn't want to encourage the enemy among us, now would I?"
>
> (*Ask* 357–358, emphases as in the original)

Outwardly, the immediate willingness of the men to turn against the women and ignore the violence committed by the soldiers seems like a prime example of complicity in toxic masculinity; being willing to overlook violence done to women by others behind the cover of not doing it oneself, and that is certainly the effect seen here. As Allan G. Johnson (2014, 213) states:

> Men's acceptance of the cultural association of manhood with control makes them complicit in its consequences, including the use of violence. Acceptance need not be conscious or intentional. Individual men need not be violent themselves. Mere silence – the voice of complicity – is enough to accomplish the effect, and to connect them to the violence that other men do.

Same applies to many of the men of Prentisstown, as Todd's foster father Ben points out when telling Todd the history of the town:

> "But if you and Cillian were innocent–" I start.
> "We *weren't* innocent," Ben says strongly, and suddenly his Noise tastes bitter. He sighs. "We weren't."
> "What do you mean?" I ask, raising my head. The sickness in my stomach ain't leaving. "What do you mean you weren't innocent?"
> "You let it happen," Viola says. "You didn't die with the other men who were protecting the women."
> "We didn't fight," he says, "and we didn't die." He shakes his head. "Not innocent at all."
>
> (*Knife* 395, emphasis as in the original)

Ben acknowledges that by not helping the women of Prentisstown or dying to defend them like some men, he and Cillian became complicit in their destruction, even though

they did it in order to take care of Todd. In Haven/New Prentisstown, just as in Prentisstown, most of the men are not willing to stand up for the women or risk their own safety to fight for theirs. It is worth noting, however, that the situation is rarely so simple. In Haven/New Prentisstown, the Mayor has invaded the city by militant force and has cast himself as a dictator, making resistance that much harder. As Mayor Ledger, the former Mayor of Haven/New Prentisstown notes to Todd afterwards: "The men are terrified now [...] Terrified they're going to be next" (*Ask* 364). Even in Prentisstown, where the toxic culture was even more pervasive, it is clear that not every man is violent or hostile towards women by nature, simply that the Mayor has created a "disciplinary system of murderous masculinity", which forces the men to comply and obey his wishes (Kennon 2017, 30). Therefore their complicity is achieved primarily through coercion, not willing or even unwitting participation.

The citizens of Haven/New Prentisstown are not the only ones blurring the lines of complicity. Despite Todd being represented as the non-misogynistic hero of the story, Ness does not hesitate to put his morality – and likeability – to the test in *Ask*, when Todd participates in the Mayor's campaign against the town's women and enslaved aliens. Traumatised and isolated, Todd goes along with the Mayor's plan to brand first the Land and then all the women of Haven/New Prentisstown and actively participates in the branding. Mayor Ledger calls Todd out on his part in Mayor Prentiss' project, and Todd's response is defensive and evasive:

> "I suppose it must be exhausting torturing women all day."
> I blink in surprise. "I don't torture 'em," I growl. "You shut yer mouth about that."
> "No, of *course* you don't torture them. What was I thinking? You just strap a corrosive metal band into their skin that can never be removed without them bleeding to death. How could that possibly be construed as *torture*?"
> "Hey!" I sit up. "We do it fast and without fuss. There are lots of ways to make it worse and we don't do that. If it's gotta be done, then it's best that it's done by *us*."
> He crosses his arms, his voice still light. "That excuse going to help you sleep tonight?"
>
> (*Ask* 362–363, emphases as in the original)

Todd's excuse for his actions is that since it must be done, at least he tries to do it gently, as opposed to the other men in the Mayor's service who would take more delight in torturing women. Regardless, Todd's participation in the torture of the Land and the women of Haven/New Prentisstown is in direct conflict with his non-violent, non-

misogynistic character. It is made apparent that Todd's behaviour is rooted in the trauma caused by the atrocities he has witnessed and being seemingly abandoned by Viola, and is not indicative of his true nature. Todd's trauma and emotional suppression are further examined in section 5.2.

Kimmel (2005, 234) suggests that the violence men commit against women – and other men – is not so much an expression of feelings of power as it is the result of a "thwarted sense of entitlement" to power. Men's feelings of entitlement to domination, control, and – what it essentially comes down to – women, when threatened, manifest as aggression and violence. Therefore, the solution lies in dismantling the gendered structures that require dominance and control of men and lead to such feelings of entitlement:

> This means the more "like women" men can be seen – nurturing, caring, frightened – and the more "like men" women can be seen – capable, rational, competent in the public sphere – the more likely that aggression will take other routes besides gendered violence.
>
> (Kimmel 2005, 233–234)

Allowing and encouraging men to feel and express caring and vulnerability diminishes the urge to assert their power and control through violent means, showing that caring is, indeed, antithetical to toxic masculinity and the gendered violence it brings in its wake. The same also applies to racial and xenophobic violence, which will be examined in the following section.

4.3 Racism and xenophobia

As hegemonic masculinity is created in contrast to marginalised masculinities, such as those embodied and performed by men who are not white, straight, wealthy or heterosexual, it relies heavily on the othering of these subordinated masculinities. In postcolonial theory, 'othering' refers to the paradoxical practice of white Western cultures viewing and portraying non-white peoples as inferior and repulsive on one hand, but exotic and fascinating on the other. These peoples and cultures are distanced from Western culture and made "the repository or projection of those aspects of themselves which Westerners do not choose to acknowledge", which makes them both loathsome and seductive, and the 'others' are painted as a homogenous group and always viewed in relation to their racial aspects rather than seeing them as individuals

influenced by other motivators (Barry [1994] 2009, 186–187). To other a group, therefore, is to make them unfamiliar and strip them of their identity outside of whichever aspect it is that makes them 'other'.

A "fascination with the other" appears to be a hallmark of science fiction (Sugarman 2009, 110). In particular, science fiction presents us with a uniquely befitting setting for delving into themes of racism and racial otherness (Lavender 2011, 8). Through alien and non-human others science fiction can explore racial dynamics and oppression detached from the context of real world peoples and histories, or reframe the contexts in new ways. However, despite the possibilities provided by the versatility of the genre, throughout its history, science fiction has also had its issues when dealing with themes of race and has often ended up perpetuating racial stereotypes instead of calling them into question (Lavender 2011, 12). The trope of using aliens as an allegory for real world racial conflicts, despite its ubiquity and usefulness, can also easily turn into a pitfall. To liken real oppressed ethnic minority groups to aliens is to dehumanise them by literally making them non-human. Even if the lesson learned in the story is that such groups should not be treated as inferior, the setting itself positions the aliens – or the racial minority – as the other. As Isiah Lavender III (ibid.) notes:

> For instance, the myth of the noble savage is the dominant conception of North America's indigenous people; these Native Americans have an innate natural simplicity and virtue uncorrupted by European civilization. Put another way, American Indians have been romanticized as "wild" men possessing a fierce sense of savage honor and wisdom – undeniably, a blatant example of racism.

This appears to be a common theme in science fiction narratives exploring the distant frontiers of space. As Mary S. Weinkauf (1979, 319) notes: "The existence of the American Indian in science fiction is a reminder of a tendency to exploit and even annihilate those who stand in the way of progress", adding that "Science-fiction writers use Native Americans as a symbolic warning that progress is dangerous to tradition and as a plea to appreciate different lifestyles". This is precisely the kind of trouble into which one runs with *Chaos Walking*.

Because Ness leaves the ethnicities of most of his characters ambiguous, the themes of racial tensions or relations between human groups are never addressed in the series. Judging by the character dynamics present in the series, then, it could be concluded that there is very little or no racism on New World – at least between humans. Instead, themes of racism and otherness are explored through the tension

between the human settlers and the planet's native alien race, The Land. In an interview, Ness admits that the aliens in *Chaos Walking* are indeed something of a racial allegory meant to reflect real historical and contemporary issues of colonisation and the treatment of indigenous peoples, stating:

> I was raised in the American West. I lived in Hawaii and Washington until I was 17 and then went to California for university, so I knew Native Americans. I've read a lot of Australian literature as well. I've read about the aboriginals and the founding of Australia. There's definitely an analog there. Would we keep making these same mistakes and not learn from what we've done in the past? It's pessimistic, but I think that we'd not be that great about it.
>
> (Ness in Levy 2009, online)

This is well aligned with Sally Sugarman's (2009, 110) suggestion that science fiction in the United States is often a tool for its citizens to "come to terms with their history." Ness himself being white, his attempts to represent racial minorities through alien allegories should be examined with a somewhat critical eye. Within the confines of this thesis it is not possible for me to delve very deeply into postcolonial theory, but, as stated earlier, race is an important aspect to consider when examining themes of masculinity, and therefore necessary to address here as well.

In *Chaos Walking*, the aliens called the Land are a stand-in for a native race of a land invaded by white Christian settlers. I find it best to avoid drawing straightforward parallels between the aliens in *Chaos Walking* and, for example, Native Americans or Australian aboriginals, even if the analogy was clearly intentional on Ness's part and as such needs to be taken into account. Instead of making comparisons to specific peoples and real life minority groups, I focus on the trope of the alien native as a literary device and the role of racism in toxic masculinity.

The Land, as a species and society, are very different from humans. Todd describes them as "men with everything a bit swelled up, everything a bit longer and weirder than on a man, their mouths a bit higher than they should be and their ears and eyes way, *way* different" with "lichen and moss growing where clothes should be" (*Knife* 69, 271). However, a more significant difference can be identified in the language and culture of their society. The Land have no individual names other than for their leader, called the Sky, identifying instead only as one communal entity who share one voice, which they communicate through the Noise, and their language is based on shared images instead of words. It is essentially a society with no hegemony. It is

significant, however, that the only point of view character from the species is an alien identified by Todd as 1017 who has spent his entire life in human captivity and has developed a personal identity that is incompatible with the hive mentality of the Land. It could also be argued that he has picked up some facets of toxic masculinity from his human captors, making him more prone to violence and extremely hungry for revenge against the humans for the things they have done to the Land and himself in particular. Comparing the larger society-wide structures of hegemony and masculinity between the humans and the Land would certainly be informative, but for the purposes of this thesis I focus mainly on Todd's perspective and his personal interactions with the species and 1017 in particular.

In addition to the native allegory, *Chaos Walking* can also be read as a Holocaust novel. Adrienne Kertzer (2012, 15) notes that the parallels are fairly explicit, listing, among others "the enslavement of a targeted group, their numeric branding, the sadistic medical experiments inflicted upon them, the mass shooting that only 1017 survives, and the humiliation that he subsequently experiences as he broods upon the group's lack of resistance to their oppressors." The series includes two major genocidal events that hint at the Holocaust narrative; the mass-murder of all women in Prentisstown and the mass-murder of the enslaved Land in Haven/New Prentisstown. Both are crucial to the story and Todd's development and therefore certainly significant when discussing the racial and gendered tensions on New World, but I do not explore the Holocaust angle in particular at length in this thesis.

When discussing the aliens in Chaos Walking and their function as a racial allegory, one runs into the problem of names. As mentioned earlier, the aliens' name for themselves is the Land, while all the human characters, including our main character and narrator Todd, refer to them as the Spackle. Names are powerful, and even as we deal with a fictional alien race, the connotations of the different names must be taken into account. In *Monsters*, 1017 explains:

> The Land is what they call themselves, have always called themselves, for are they not the very Land of this world? With the Sky watching over them? Men do not call them the Land. They invented a name based on a mistaken first attempt at communication and were never curious enough to fix it. Maybe that was where all the problems began.
>
> (*Monsters* 79)

The question of naming is therefore in the very centre of the conflict between the different species. "The Spackle" or "spacks" is a derogatory name given by the colonisers – a name which "suggests dappling and spotting, which work as convenient markers of these primitive natives' fluidity and nonhegemonic appearance" (Kennon 2017, 28) – which is why I avoid using it when talking about the aliens in my analysis. When I discuss Todd's attitudes and certain narrative details, I may use the term "Spackle" for clarity's sake, but as a rule I refer to the alien species as "the Land".

Similarly, the most prominent alien character in the series to interact the most with Todd and who is also one of the narrators in *Monsters*, is referred to either as 1017 by Todd or the Return by the other members of the Land. 1017 is the slave number with which he was marked by Todd as he and the Mayor's men branded all the aliens, and the Return is what he is called by the other members of the Land when he escapes captivity and returns to them. He does not identify with either name, but as the Land do not have individual names and he himself never expresses what he wishes to be called, I am forced to make do with these names for the sake of brevity and clarity.

When the human colony on New World began struggling with survival and with the Noise, they blamed the Land and waged a war against them, destroying much of the population. The war, which took place before the events of the novel, is painted as deeply unfair and unbalanced. As Ben describes it, "They didn't stand a chance. We had guns, they didn't, and that was the end of the Spackle" (*Knife* 391). Todd, however, was taught a different history, according to which the Land initiated the war and were responsible for infecting humans with the Noise germ that supposedly killed all the women on New World, including Todd's mother. Just as Todd grew up believing the Prentisstown propaganda regarding women, he also never came to question what he had been taught about the Land:

> "We *were* settlers", I continue. "Landed here to found New World about twenty years ago or so. But there were aliens here. The Spackle. And they… didn't want us." I'm telling her what every boy in Prentisstown knows, the history even the dumbest farm boy like yours truly knows by heart.
> (*Knife* 138, emphasis as in the original)

Todd accepts this record of history at face value and even later, when most of what he thought he knew about his hometown has been proven false, it takes him much longer to change his mind set about the Land and accept that his prejudices are not justified. Todd begins his journey under the impression that the Land is mostly extinct, but once that

assumption proves false and Todd is actually confronted with a member of the alien species, his fear immediately manifests as anger and violence. The Land makes for a good target for Todd's anger and frustration, as he is incapable of killing a human, but his anger and fear towards the Land allows him to act out his violent impulses on them.

The murder Todd commits is undoubtedly motivated by toxic masculinity as it comes directly on the heels of Todd's encounter with Davy, who taunted him for his unmanly behaviour and inability to commit acts of violence. Considering that this is Todd's mindset when he encounters the alien, it is little wonder that he reacts with violence. Todd sees it as his chance to prove his masculinity as well as exact revenge on the species he believes is responsible for his mother's death. However, this excuse does not hold water for long as Viola reminds Todd that most of what he has been taught to think about the world has turned out to be false. The murder, committed in "a bout of hyper-masculine xenophobia" (Seymour 2016, 639), marks a turning point in Todd's relationship with the Land. He begins to understand and question the history he has been taught as well as the xenophobic attitudes he has adopted.

Afterwards, while fighting a fever, Todd hallucinates Aaron taunting him about his inability to kill:

> "*Go ahead, Todd,*" Aaron says and I swear I smell the dankness of him. "*Cross over from innocence to sin. If you can.*"
> "I've done it," I say. "I've already killed."
> "*Killing a Spackle ain't killing a man,*" he says, grinning away at how stupid I am. "*Spackles are devils put here to test us. Killing one's like killing a turtle.*"
> (*Knife* 324, emphases as in the original)

As it is uncertain how much of this version of Aaron is real and how much is simply Todd projecting his own fears and insecurities onto Aaron's person, it is also difficult to say whether this mindset is Todd's own thinking or something he simply imagines Aaron would say. On the other side of this hallucinatory experience, however, Todd emerges with a clear understanding that he did, in fact, kill a person, not an animal: "'I killed it,' I say. I swallow. 'I killed *him*. It was a him'" (*Knife* 373, emphasis as in the original). Somewhat paradoxically, it is the act of murdering a member of the Land that solidifies Todd's identity as "the boy who can't kill", not because Todd does not think the alien was a person, but because the guilt he feels for his crime incapacitates him from doing anything similar again.

Even with his better understanding of the Land and the guilt he feels over murdering one of them, Todd is still not freed from his xenophobia and hatred. In fact, it is Todd's guilt that leads him to commit even more crimes against the aliens. In *Ask,* Todd is forced to work as a supervisor to enslaved members of the Land and for the first time gets a more intimate look into their lives and dynamics. He starts to recognise their family patterns and witnesses acts of compassion and caring between the members of the Land as they try to survive. He sees and is therefore forced to acknowledge their humanity, but ultimately chooses to ignore it, thinking: "You can see all that if you look close. But it's easier if you don't" (*Ask* 259). This allows him to keep picturing the Land as other, a homogenous group with no individuality or characteristics beyond its race.

Todd begins his work with the Land with good intentions. He vows to treat them fairly and kindly, thinking: "I'll treat them well. I will. I'll see that they get enough water and food and I'll do everything I can to protect 'em. I *will*. I promise that to myself. Cuz that's what she'd want" (*Ask* 65, emphasis as in the original). It is crucial to note that Todd makes this vow because it is what Viola would do, therefore basing his actions on Viola's moral code. Similarly, after he saves 1017 from a bomb, Todd thinks: "I saved him for her" (*Ask* 283). As this demonstrates, throughout the novel, Todd's sense of morality and the acts of caring it inspires are largely dictated by what he thinks Viola would want him to do. Due to the Mayor's manipulation, Todd has lost his grip on his own morality and relies on Viola's judgement to guide him, a point which is explored further in section 5.2 when examining Todd's emotional disconnection. Even though the decision is rooted in his connection with Viola, it also appears that Todd's urge to be better and to start anew with the Land is genuine, and he commits himself to treating them fairly and protecting them as penance for the murder he committed.

Despite his promises, as time goes by, Todd becomes increasingly frustrated with and antagonistic towards the Land, resenting their fear and silence and especially resenting the insubordination of 1017. He is the only one to display open resentment and disrespect towards Todd, which enrages him enough to eventually attack 1017. However, Todd also saves him on several occasions. When 1017 indicates no gratitude whatsoever, Todd's reaction is contemptuous: "I saved his stupid life and this is the thanks I get? *Animals*, I think. *Stupid, worthless, effing animals."* (*Ask* 211, emphases as in the original). This statement is somewhat ironic, as Todd is shown to be very caring towards actual animals, growing extremely attached to his dog Manchee and later his

horse Angharrad, both of whom he considers anything but worthless, suggesting that his hatred towards the Land actually makes them less than animals in his regard. Therefore, while Todd's intentions are originally noble and he makes a genuine attempt to overcome his prejudices, it is as Kimmel (2010, 11) writes: "privileged men, straight and white, wracked by guilt, do not necessarily make great political allies." Todd's guilt only ends up driving him to fall back on his xenophobic attitudes, using the Land as a scapegoat for his shame and anxiety. Despite being aware of the – for the lack of a better word – humanity of the Land, Todd reverts back to thinking of them as animals to justify his hatred towards them. On some level, Todd does care *about* their plight, but his prejudices and guilt prevent him from truly caring *for* them.

Later, when he discovers that all the enslaved aliens have been murdered, Todd is deeply upset and traumatised. Seeing their bodies, Todd is once again forced to face his own prejudices and failures:

> Oh, God, no, I hated 'em–
> I tried not to but I couldn't help it–
> (no, I could–)
> I think of all the times I cursed 'em–
> All the times I imagined 'em as sheep–
> (a knife in my hand, plunging down–)
> But I didn't want *this*–
>
> <div align="right">(Ask 306, emphasis as in the original)</div>

The only survivor from the genocide turns out to be 1017, but although Todd tries to help him and allows him to escape, the alien continues to resent him. 1017 begrudges Todd for the things he has done to the Land and considers Todd even worse than the Mayor and his soldiers, as Todd knew that what he was doing was wrong but did it anyway:

> *He is worse than the others*, I show. *He is worst of all of them.*
> *Because–*
> *Because he **knew** he was doing wrong. He felt the **pain** of his actions–*
> *But he did not amend them*, shows the Sky.
> *The rest are worth as much as their pack animals*, I show, *but worst is the one who knows better and does **nothing***.
>
> <div align="right">(Monsters 84, italics and bold as in the original)</div>

Todd and 1017 continue to be contrasted throughout the trilogy. The dynamic that exists between them highlights a crucial theme in the series, a "narrative that keeps demonstrating how easy it is for victims to become perpetrators" (Kertzer 2012, 15).

The reader understands that Todd's aggression towards the Land stems from his position as a victim of toxic masculinity, but that does not erase the fact that for 1017 he is the perpetrator. Simply because Todd is the main character does not put him beyond reproach and 1017's hatred for him is presented as reasonable and understandable. However, in the cycle of victim and perpetrator, 1017 also makes the turn from one to the other as his vendetta against Todd leads to great violence and war. Therefore, just as with Todd, being the victim of the xenophobic violence and oppression does not necessarily justify the acts of violence he later goes on to commit himself.

Todd's change of attitude towards the Land is not born out of a caring interpersonal relationship with the Land themselves. The high tensions between the humans and the aliens on a society-wide level, as well as the tension between Todd and 1017 specifically, fairly effectively prevent the formation of any caring personal connections that could help Todd rid himself of his toxic, xenophobic notions. However, care still plays a key role in his development towards understanding and acceptance.

As with his attitudes towards women, it is his connection to his foster father Ben and Viola that drives Todd to re-evaluate and eventually reform his attitudes and behaviour towards the Land. Viola has no preconceptions of the Land other than what he has heard from Todd, and she is therefore able to view them from a more objective stance without the baggage of trauma and culturally ingrained prejudice. From their very first encounter with the Land, Viola tries to dissuade Todd from doing them harm and is outraged when Todd kills one of them. As established, Viola's benevolence towards the Land does impact Todd's behaviour towards them as well, as he relies heavily on Viola's moral guidance and approval.

Ben's influence is perhaps even more persuasive. Ben is shown to be sympathetic – or at least not openly hostile or prejudiced – towards the Land from the beginning. Later, after being saved and healed by the Land and learning to communicate with them through his Noise, Ben adopts much of their culture and becomes their advocate for the humans, making him a link between the two species. Ben essentially represents the potential for coexistence and peace between the humans and the Land, and due to his influence Todd chooses to prioritise this prospect over the Mayor's warmongering and antagonism as well. Therefore caring for and being cared for people who actively advocate for unity instead of othering sways Todd's attitudes as well.

5   Masculinity and identity in *Chaos Walking*

From the beginning of the series, Todd's self-image is a conflicted one. Todd walks the line between childhood and adulthood; no longer able to hide in the innocence of boyhood but unable or unwilling to fulfil the requirements of manhood as dictated by the society he lives in. This paradox of being an adolescent in a society with no conception of adolescence – as in Prentisstown one is supposed to transition directly from boy to man, from childhood to adulthood – can be pinpointed as one of the main causes of Todd's crisis of identity.

After leaving Prentisstown, Todd is forced to face the possibility that the version of history he has been raised to believe is not the only one or necessarily the correct one, and therefore also forced to re-examine Prentisstown's mode of masculinity, on which his conceptions of manhood and identity had been largely built. This conflict leads to much anxiety as Todd tries to parse out which version of masculinity and adulthood he is supposed to adopt. As Mark Pope and Matt Englar-Carlson (2001, 367) point out: "Boys who are confused with societal messages about what is expected of them as boys will most likely become men who continue to feel disconnected." This is certainly the case with Todd, whose inability to let go of the demands of toxic masculinity placed on him by the society he grew up in leads to a deep crisis of identity, as he tries to balance between his non-violent nature and his need to fulfil the requirements of masculinity and become a man.

In this section I look at the ways toxic masculinity in its various forms influences Todd's self-image and identity and how care helps him rid himself of the harmful expectations of his society and rebuild his identity on more caring values. First, I examine the role of violence and murder in the masculinities of New World and how their significance as transitional rites from childhood to adulthood affects Todd's identity. Secondly, I look at the negative, repressive effects toxic masculinity has on boys' and men's emotional expression and how this is explored through Todd and his traumatic experiences in *Ask*. Thirdly, I examine Todd's parental figures, Ben and the Mayor, and how they and the masculinities they embody influence Todd's own conceptions of masculinity and identity.

5.1 Masculinity and murder

Masculinity and violence have historically been closely associated with each other, so much so that the potential for violence is widely considered a ubiquitous characteristic of masculinity (Ravn 2018, 292; Johnson 2014, 212). While it is understood that not every man is violent, physical strength and the ability to protect and defend one's family and loved ones are often considered essential aspects of masculinity (Ravn 2018, 292). However, the violent manifestations of masculinity are not limited to protection, as violence is also a tool for maintaining control and power both on a personal and societal level. Boys and men are expected to be capable of violence, or at least condone and glorify that capacity in other men in order to affirm their masculinity (Johnson 2014, 212). At its most extreme, the expectation of violence is no longer concerned with defending others or even defeating others in a fight, but with the ability to kill. As hooks (2004, 11) puts it:

> Yet no one talks about the role patriarchal notions of manhood play in teaching boys that it is their nature to kill, then teaching that they can do nothing to change this nature – nothing, that is, that will leave their masculinity intact. As our culture prepares males to embrace war, they must be all the more indoctrinated into patriarchal thinking that tells them that it is in their nature to kill and enjoy killing.

This very much holds true for Todd and the world he lives in. According to the doctrine of the violent, male-dominated society of Prentisstown and the Mayor, in order to become a man, a boy must kill another man:

> Cuz the thing Ben showed me back when I left our farm, the way that a boy in Prentisstown becomes a man, the reason that boys who've become men don't talk to boys who are still boys, the reason that boys who've become men are complicit in the crimes of Prentisstown is– It's– And I make myself say it– It's by killing another man. All by theirselves. [...] One man's life was given over to a boy to end, all on his own. A man dies, a man is born. Everyone complicit. Everyone guilty. Except me.
>
> (*Knife* 448–449)

Todd is made aware of this collective secret early on in the story, but it is not revealed to the reader until much later in *Knife*. It is therefore difficult to pinpoint how much of Todd's obsession with the ability to kill as a more of masculinity is directly related to his newfound knowledge of this violent rite of passage and how much had been instilled

in him from childhood. In one sense it would appear to heighten his anxiety over his inability to commit the act required of him, but at the same time he represses and denies the truth, not allowing himself to finish the thought whenever he is reminded of it: "And I can't help but think for a minute about what Ben showed me– About how a boy becomes– I cover it up" (*Knife* 225). Whether he does this to keep himself from having to think about it or from revealing it to Viola is unclear. This is naturally also a literary device to build tension and to prolong the reveal to the reader, but it is in keeping with Todd's personality and his anxieties about masculinity. Regardless, Todd believes it. He takes for granted the fact that to become a man he must be able to kill, and that his failure to do so is a failure at performing masculinity thinking: "Whatever they want, whatever the weakness is in me that I can't kill a man even when he deserves it, it's got to change for me to be a man. It's *got* to or how can I hold my head up?" (*Knife* 268, emphasis as in the original). Even as he is running to get away from the men of Prentisstown, he cannot outrun the expectations of masculinity placed on him.

It is also noteworthy that in order to become a man in Prentisstown, a boy does not simply kill any man they happen upon. The victims are assigned by the Mayor, meaning that in addition to being a rite of passage for the boys, the murders simultaneously serve as a capital punishment for men who attempt to escape Prentisstown or deviate from the town's norms of masculinity in any way. The purpose of the murder rite is therefore twofold; both making the boys complicit in the crimes of the men and instilling in them a fear of deviance or rebellion, having been forced to witness firsthand what fate would await them if they tried it.

Todd is hunted and persecuted because he avoids committing the rite of passage that would make him a man in the eyes of Prentisstown – murder. The stakes in Todd becoming a killer are high on both sides. For the Mayor, Todd essentially becomes a proof of concept, a test to see if he can turn every man in Prentisstown into a soldier by making them complicit in the town's culture of violence and murder. As Viola explains to Todd:

> "[...] Don't you wonder why they want you so badly?"
> The pit in me is just getting blacker and darker. "Cuz I'm the one who don't fit."
> "Exactly!"
> My eyes go wide. "Why is that good news? I have an army who wants to kill me cuz I'm not a killer."
> "Wrong," she says. "You have an army who wants to *make* you a killer."
> I blink. "Huh?"

> She takes another step forward. "If they can turn you into the kind of man they want–"
>
> "Boy," I say. "Not a man yet."
>
> She waves this away. "If they can snuff out that part of you that's good, the part of you that won't kill, then they win, don't you see? If they can do it to you, they can do it to anyone. And they win. They *win*!"
>
> <div align="right">(Knife 265, emphases as in the original)</div>

For Todd, therefore, the conflict becomes having to choose between fulfilling the Mayor's agenda and proving his power by killing, and failing the test of becoming a man altogether. Viola identifies Todd's inability to kill as the "part of [him] that's good", but Todd remains unconvinced. Todd's conviction that violence and killing are prerequisites for masculinity is so strong that any allusion to his inability to fulfil them fills him with anxiety and even rage. When Viola argues that Todd is not a killer, Todd responds with anger: "Don't SAY THAT!! Don't you EVER SAY THAT!!" (*Knife* 264). Todd wants to be considered a killer, because being considered anything less is a threat to his masculinity and place in society. Yet when he actually commits a murder shortly thereafter, he is horrified:

> And (no no no no no) I see the fear that was coming from his Noise–
> (No no no, please no.)
> And there's nothing left for me to throw up but I heave anyway–
> And I'm a killer–
> I'm a killer–
> I'm a killer–
> (Oh, please no) I'm a killer.
>
> <div align="right">(Knife 277)</div>

This goes to show that the desire to be a killer is not born from Todd's own desires or his character, but from the mandates of the society he grew up in. As such, instead of relieving Todd of his anxieties, the murder ends up further complicating his relationship with violence and therefore his masculinity. In fact, it could be argued that it is the murder itself and the guilt it triggers in Todd that solidifies the inability to kill as one of his defining characteristics.

The connection between violence, killing, and masculinity is perhaps most commonly observed in the context of the military and war. According to Stan Goff (2015, 1), "[w]ar is one of the most powerful formative practices in the development of masculinity understood as domination and violence; and recursively, masculinity established as domination and violence reproduces the practice of war." As such, war

and toxic masculinity feed into each other, creating a culture of violent masculinity that openly celebrates the systematic destruction and oppression of others. In reality, the link is hardly that straightforward. David H. J. Morgan (1994, 177) argues that, while there is a clear link between military identity and toxic masculinity, war may also provide a unique opportunity for men to express care, pain and fear more openly than in any other context. While the complexities of masculinity in battle and wartime are certainly acknowledged and explored in *Chaos Walking*, the series does also emphasise the connection between war and destructive, toxic masculinity.

Todd is thrown into battle and war at the very beginning of *Monsters*, and his experiences have a significant impact on his views on masculinity. Todd has been struggling with the cultural imperative for a man to be able to kill and his unwillingness to commit such an act throughout the series, but in battle, the stakes of this conflict are heightened to an extreme. Initially, Todd does not cope well with the pressure and the violence of war, and when faced with the choice between action and non-action, he hesitates:

> I turn, gun raised–
> They're still coming–
> I aim at a Spackle raising his bow at a soldier–
> I fire–
> But I pull it to the side on purpose at the last second, missing altogether (shut up)–
>
> > (*Monsters* 41)

Even in battle, where killing could save himself and others, Todd is incapable of doing so and misses on purpose. He also comments on his choice with a defensive "shut up", which usually accompanies actions he is ashamed of and considers failures in performing masculinity. This tendency is further examined in section 5.2. However, Todd also comes to experience the thrill of battle and reluctantly admits to enjoying it at times. This realisation, in turn, deepens his crisis of masculinity even further.

The significance of war as a rite of passage to manhood is one of the central conflicts between Todd and the Mayor, as becomes apparent at the very beginning of *Monsters*:

> "And what other kind of man would you want leading you into battle?" he says, reading my Noise. "What other kind of man is suitable for war?"
> *A monster*, I think, remembering what Ben told me once. *War makes monsters of men.*

"Wrong," says the Mayor. "It's war that makes us men in the first place. Until there's war, we are only children."

(*Monsters* 11, emphases as in the original)

Whereas for Davy the rite of passage to manhood is sex, for the Mayor it is the ability to do violence and withstand the terrors of war. The Mayor is shown to actively enjoy war and battle, a quality which Todd finds disturbing. For Todd, despite his brief experiences of excitement, the war is nothing but traumatising. The Mayor claims that Todd's actions in battle make him a man, saying: "You didn't buckle under extreme pressure. You kept your head. You kept your steed even though she was injured. And most importantly, Todd, you kept your word. [...] These are the actions of a man, Todd, truly they are" (*Monsters* 66–67). He commends Todd for his ability to remain in control under extreme pressure and in the face of extreme violence and associates these traits directly with masculinity, but Todd's ability to maintain control – or the appearance of control – comes at the cost of his mental wellbeing and his caring connections with others. This aspect is also further examined in section 5.2.

While the maintenance of masculinity plays a significant part in his obsession with the ability to kill, fitting in and gaining the status of a man is not Todd's only motivation for turning to violence – or wishing he could do so. His motivation is also directly linked to protection and care. Even though he grew up in a society that promoted disconnection and even cruelty, it becomes apparent early on that Todd is at his core very protective of people he cares about. In particular, it takes Todd very little time to become instinctively protective of Viola. When they arrive in Farbranch, after only a brief acquaintance, Todd jumps to defend Viola from a man he deems threatening without hesitation:

And it happens before I even know I'm doing it, I swear. One minute I'm standing there behind everyone and the next thing I know, I'm between Matthew and Viola, I have my knife out pointing at him, my own Noise falling like an avalanche and my mouth saying, "You best take two steps away from her and you best be taking 'em right quick."

(*Knife* 175)

At this point Todd's eagerness to protect Viola surprises even himself, but as they grow even closer, their mutually protective relationship becomes both of their driving force. However, this also feeds into Todd's belief that the ability to do violence is central to his ability to keep his loved ones safe. Todd is certain that had he been able to kill the

people threatening him from the very beginning he and Viola would be safe and Ben and Cillian would be alive, and as Todd states, "that's a trade I'd make any day. I'll be a killer, if that's what it takes. Watch me" (*Knife* 269). Similarly, when faced with outright war, Todd thinks:

> I don't want to be here–
> I don't want to fight anyone–
> But if it keeps her safe–
> (*Viola*)
> Then I'll bloody well fight–
>
> (*Monsters* 28, italics as in the original)

This goes to show that Todd's impulse to do violence is closely tied to his care circle. His defiant proclamation that he would "be a killer" if it ensured the safety of his family and loved ones suggests that his obsession with violence is not simply a manifestation of his pride and need to fit in with the toxic society he lives in, but of his sincere belief that violence would protect him and the people he cares for. The image of the protecting and providing man is, however, in itself closely linked to hegemonic masculinity and therefore this motivation is not purely altruistic or separate from his other, less noble motivators.

Todd's willingness to turn to violence out of care is not out of the ordinary, especially in the context of YA dystopias. While violence and care ethics may not seem like concepts that go well together, Seymour argues that especially in YA dystopias they are not necessarily entirely incompatible, nor indeed very far removed from each other. Due to their bleak political frameworks that often set the heroes against corrupt, totalitarian regimes, YA dystopias also have more leeway when it comes to violence committed by the heroes than much of other adolescent fiction. Because of this moral middle ground, it is possible for heroes to turn to violence out of the need to protect their loved ones, for example in the form of a rebellion or an otherwise violent uprising and remain heroes. In fact, in much of dystopian YA the concept of a care circle is utilised for the exact purpose of raising the stakes for a non-violent hero to resort to violence to protect the people they care about (Seymour 2016, 683, 686). This is the central dilemma Todd faces throughout most of *Chaos Walking* as he tries to balance between his aversion to violence and his need to protect his loved ones.

Even though violence committed by the protagonists of a dystopian YA story can be justified and accepted, according to Seymour there is still a line drawn at murder.

Murder, Seymour argues, is an act "committed out of desire rather than necessity and is therefore aligned to the realm of hyper-masculine self-regarding indicators" (Seymour 2016, 636–637). In dystopian YA, therefore, it is permissible for a hero to kill, particularly out of self-defence or for the greater good, but murder is always self-serving and as such generally inexcusable. This distinction is largely maintained in *Chaos Walking*, but not unquestioned. Todd and Viola's moralities when it comes to violence and killing are put to test on several occasions, but it is significant that when Todd kills the member of the Land in *Knife*, his deed is not justified by a caring motive. It is made apparent that Todd does not commit the murder out of a need to protect Viola, but rather out of fear and the need to reinforce his thwarted masculinity, which had been called into question by Davy. In fact, Viola actively objects to the killing, trying to stop Todd and reprimanding him aggressively afterwards. Therefore, even on the scale of violence in YA dystopias, Todd's violent act is not portrayed as righteous or justifiable, nor is it rewarded by his care circle.

It is worth noting that Todd is not the only one willing to resort to extreme and violent measures to protect their loved ones. Viola, too, commits violent acts that go against her morals in order to save Todd. In fact, it is Viola, instead of Todd, who ends up murdering Aaron at the end of *Knife*. The murder of Aaron was meant to be Todd's rite of passage to adulthood and to symbolise his indoctrination into the Mayor's ideology and the significance of this ritual is so great that Aaron himself insists that Todd kill him as sacrifice. Viola subverts this ritual by essentially committing the rite of manhood on Todd's behalf, in addition to getting revenge for her own suffering at the hands of Aaron. Additionally, in *Monsters*, Viola launches a missile at a crowd in the middle of a battle in order to protect Todd, a deed over which she feels enormous guilt later on. This goes to show that violence motivated by care is not exclusively linked to masculinity. However, as demonstrated by Todd's deep crisis of identity over the matter, the expectation of being able to provide protection by means of violence is placed mainly on men, making it a gendered issue regardless.

While care does in some instances spur Todd to turn to violence, it also becomes the antidote to his violent urges. Both Viola and Ben, the people who form Todd's primary care circle, openly and actively value and appreciate Todd's non-violent and caring nature; the very features rejected and devalued by the society he lives in. The disparity between these two value systems and Todd's experience of failure at meeting

either requirement is at the root of his conflicted identity, but eventually Todd comes to prioritise the approval and acceptance of his care circle over the mandates of the hegemonic system. While Todd's fear of losing his loved ones does drive him towards violence, the care and love provided by those very people also enable him to turn away from it and form his identity outside of the toxic rules and requirements of the Mayor or other murderous men on New World.

5.2 Disconnection and repressing emotion

Violence against others – in particular women – is undoubtedly a deeply ingrained part of masculinity, especially in the world of *Chaos Walking*, but it may not be the primary form of violence required by toxic masculinity. According to hooks (2004, 66), "The first act of violence that patriarchy demands of males is not violence towards women. Instead patriarchy demands of all males that they engage in acts of psychic self-mutilation, that they kill off the emotional parts of themselves." The systemic power of toxic masculinity relies not only on the harm men do to women and other subordinated groups, but the harm men are forced to do to themselves. Furthermore, it is the latter that enables the former – men must commit an act of emotional violence against themselves in order to commit acts of violence against others.

The goal of this 'self-mutilation' described by hooks is to achieve a sense of control. Controlling and oppressing other groups in the name of solidifying one's own position is a significant part of maintaining hegemonic masculinity, but it is not the only requirement. Hegemonic masculinity also requires the members of the ruling group to maintain control over themselves. As Johnson (2014, 13–14) states:

> Men are assumed (and expected) to be in control at all times, to be unemotional (except for anger and rage), to present themselves as invulnerable, autonomous, independent, strong, rational, logical, dispassionate, knowledgeable, always right, and in command of every situation, especially those involving women. [...] Under patriarchy, control shapes not only the broad outlines of social life but also men's inner lives. The more men see control as central to their sense of self, well-being, worth, and safety, the more driven they feel to go after it and to organize their inner and outer lives around it. This takes men away from connection to theirs and themselves and towards disconnection.

The need to retain control over others and the self is a central tenet of hegemonic masculinity. Essentially, the goal of this rigorous control is to maintain the appearance of neutrality and rationality as basic functions of masculinity – and therefore humanity – against which femininity is measured. It is a conscious effort to portray masculinity as effortless, as Johnson (2014, 82–83) further points out:

> What we call 'unemotional' is actually a controlled emotional flatness that is no less an emotional state than depression, hysteria, rage, or grief. In not seeing this, we buy into the illusion that masculine men are emotionally inexpressive, rational, objective, in control, and 'above it all,' and that being emotionally expressive precludes being rational, objective, or anything other than out of control. In truth, being masculine is not about being unemotional. It is about acknowledging or expressing only those emotions that enhance men's control and status – anger, detachment, and rage – and it is about renaming or explaining away all the rest.

The emotions of grief and sadness when expressed by men and boys are seen as particularly threatening to hegemonic masculinity. As familiar adages like "boys don't cry" and "be a man" suggest, men are taught from a young age to suppress feelings of sadness and bottle them in instead of expressing them openly (hooks 2004, 22). Crying and expressions of sadness in particular, as they are inherently linked to caring and vulnerability, are considered unmanly and therefore undesirable even in young boys. However, feelings that cannot be fully suppressed will find an outlet in other, more acceptable emotional reactions, often anger and even violence. As hooks (2004, 50) puts it: "Boys learn to cover up grief with anger; the more troubled the boy, the more intense the mask of indifference. Shutting down emotionally is the best defense when the longing for connection must be denied." The inability to express emotion and vulnerability leads to distancing and disconnecting oneself from others, which then in turn makes it even harder to express emotion openly.

From the beginning, Todd is reluctant to express his grief and seems to have an innate understanding that it is not acceptable for a man to do so. Whenever he gets emotional or comes close to tears he begins repeating the words "shut up" inside his head, simultaneously commanding himself to shut it down and effectively begging the reader not to comment on it. In *Ask*, when he is being interrogated by the Mayor, Todd becomes upset and has trouble dealing with the emotion: "'You killed my mother,' I say, my voice catching (shut up), my Noise filling with rage and grief, my eyes screwing up with tears (shut up, shut up, shut up)" (*Ask* 13). Todd is actively trying to

repress his grief to maintain the appearance of unemotional, controlled masculinity. The same applies to feelings of fear. Later in *Ask*, when Todd and Viola are caught trying to escape and Todd fears for her safety, he is very defensive about his reaction:

> I don't wanna talk about what happens next. The Mayor leaves some soldiers behind to guard the house of healing and the others drag me back to the cathedral and he don't say nothing as we go, not a word as I beg him not to hurt her, as I promise and scream and cry (shut up) that I'll do anything he wants as long as he don't hurt her. (shut up, shut up) […] I cry and I throw up and I beg and I call out her name and I beg some more and it all shames me so much I can't even say it. [...] And I tell myself that I'm doing all this yelling, all this begging, to hide in my Noise what she told me, to keep her safe, to keep him from knowing. I tell myself I have to cry and beg as loud as I can so he won't hear. (shut up) That's what I tell myself. And I don't wanna say no more about it. (just effing shut the hell up)
>
> (*Ask* 202–203)

It is noteworthy that moments like these are practically the only instances where the reader is addressed even implicitly. Todd's insistence that he does not want to talk about his failure to protect Viola as if he is too humiliated to admit it, even to the reader, is a signal of intense shame and denial. His inability to save Viola from capture and subsequent torture and his expressions of fear and desperation caused by it are in direct contradiction with the expectations placed on men and therefore shameful and embarrassing for Todd, who feels a strong need to be seen as a man. In general, Todd urges the reader to shut up during moments when his masculinity is being threatened by displays of emotion or weakness of any sort. When faced with a man trying to attack him and his dog Manchee with a machete in Farbranch, Todd describes the scenario as follows: "'Run!' I shout to Manchee, turning and making a break for the back doors. (Shut up, you honestly think a knife is a match for a machete?)" (*Knife* 200). In this instance Todd is actively explaining and justifying his implied cowardice and unmanliness in running instead of fighting like he thinks a man ought to do. Todd's failures at performing masculinity lead to intense feelings of shame, but the shame, in turn, leads to an even more intense sense of failure. Shame is therefore both a result of toxic masculinity and its cause.

In *Chaos Walking*, the existence of the Noise puts the men in a particularly difficult position when it comes to expressing – and suppressing – their emotions. In a culture that expects men to shut down and control their emotions, the existence of a Noise that broadcasts their every thought to the world serves as very thought-provoking

social commentary. It underlines the conflict between emotional expression and toxic masculinity; to perform the required masculinity, one must control one's thoughts and feelings in addition to one's behaviour. As Todd learns on his journey, this conflict is the root cause of most of the trouble and hostilities that have occurred on New World. Because of the Noise, Todd and every other man on New World must learn to control their thoughts and emotions if they are to keep anything secret or depart from the status quo. This is a variation on the theme of mind control common in science fiction. On New World, men are forced to enact mind control on their own thoughts in order to perform hegemonic masculinity, and therefore the mind control becomes gender control; when one's thoughts are broadcasted to the entire community, non-conformity becomes easy to detect and suppress.

Later in the series, having spent more time around the Mayor and being taught by him, Todd begins to control his Noise and emotions through the Mayor's technique, which is repeating the mantra "I am the Circle, the Circle is me" over and over again. Although Todd does not fully understand the purpose of this exercise, in time he becomes successful in using it to mask his Noise – and therefore his true feelings – from both himself and others:

> And her Noise has stopped screaming.
> Screaming about war.
> I close my eyes.
> (*I am the Circle and the Circle is me,* I think, light as a feather–)
> (cuz you can silence yer Noise for yerself too–)
> (silence the screaming, silence the dying–)
> (silence all that you saw that you don't wanna see again–)
> (*Monsters* 168, emphasis as in the original)

Todd is deeply traumatised by the war, and uses this mechanism to help himself cope with the trauma and stress. Not only does Todd learn to silence his Noise, he also learns to use it to control others and make them do as he commands. Todd is initially horrified by his ability to do this, but continues to use the power all the same. Essentially, Todd uses mind control as a way to feel in control and to mask the helplessness and powerlessness he feels over other aspects of his life.

This behaviour is in line with studies conducted by William Lorber and Hector A. Garcia (2010) on war veterans and the interconnectedness of post-traumatic stress and traditional masculine gender roles. According to Lorber and Garcia (2010, 298), the trauma experienced by war veterans can cause them to "fall back on masculine gender

role norms, for instance, those regarding emotional control and concealment of perceived weakness". The difficulties these veterans experience with processing emotion stem both from trauma itself, but also from the knowledge that showing weakness or emotions relating to anxiety and depression is not in line with the masculine role they seek to embody. (Lober and Garcia 2010, 300–301). Todd's traumatising experiences with battle and war leave him with the intense need to control his thoughts and emotions, and managing his Noise allows him to do just that. The added level of controlling other people goes to show how deep Todd's need for control goes, as he himself acknowledges how harmful that power is, but continues to use it regardless.

Todd's mind control may not be a conscious choice to promote his masculinity, but it is in line with the expectations of hegemonic masculinity to maintain control over oneself and others. Todd combats his feelings of powerlessness and anxiety by establishing his power over his Noise and over other people, but in doing so compromises his connection to his care circle, as invading the thoughts of others and forcing them to your will could be considered the antithesis of caring. Like Elliott (2016, 252) emphasises, in order for a relationship to be equal and reciprocally caring, there is no room for domination. While Todd cannot – and likely would not – use his powers on Viola, the manipulative behaviour and the silencing of his Noise end up distancing the two of them, as Viola is made uncomfortable and uncertain by Todd's silence. Therefore Todd's efforts to reaffirm his power and masculinity end up driving him away from his loved ones and away from care. Not admitting weakness or showing vulnerability allows Todd to maintain his masculine status, but at the cost of getting the care and emotional support he needs from the people close to him.

It is also worth noting that the connection between lack of emotion and lack of care goes both ways. Just as Todd's attempts to control his emotions end up damaging the caring, emotional bonds he has with others, the loss of his care circle is one of the things that drive him to suppress his emotions in the first place. The correlation between Todd losing his care circle and his progress towards a more emotionally disconnected and uncaring masculinity is well demonstrated in the series.

For most of *Ask*, Todd is cut off from his care circle. Viola is captured first by the Mayor and later taken away by Mistress Coyle, and while Ben's fate is unknown, Todd has every reason to believe him dead. Despite the close connection that has

formed between Todd and Viola in *Knife*, as soon as they are separated and get caught up in the political games between the Mayor and Mistress Coyle, their relationship begins to suffer. Viola has become something of a moral anchor for Todd, and it is her absence and Todd's fear of being abandoned by her that allow him to progress further into emotional numbness and denial. He admits that many of the caring acts he commits, like occasionally saving or protecting one of the enslaved aliens, he commits for Viola's sake: "I saved him. (I saved him for her) (if she was here, she could see, see how I saved him) (if she was here) (but she ain't)" (*Ask* 283). This suggests that at this point much of Todd's morality is tied to Viola and her approval or disapproval. But once Todd starts to doubt Viola's own morality after she is taken by the Answer and somewhat reluctantly joins their ranks, he is unable to motivate himself with Viola's approval any longer. It is important to note that, while Viola's influence on Todd is mostly a positive thing, the fact that Todd relies on Viola to be his moral compass and emotional guide is in itself symptomatic of certain types of hegemonic masculinity. As Joseph H. Pleck ([1980] 2004) notes:

> In traditional male–female relationships, men experience their emotions vicariously through women. Many men have learned to depend on women to help them express their emotions, indeed, to express their emotions for them. At an ultimate level, many men are unable to feel emotionally alive except through relationships with women.

This description certainly applies to Todd and his behaviour in *Ask*. Todd's ability to process and express emotion appears to be directly contingent on Viola's presence and influence and very quickly deteriorates in her absence and under the influence of the Mayor. When Todd sees that all the imprisoned members of the Land have been killed and believes that the resistance organisation Answer, with whom Viola escaped, is to blame, his reaction is intense:

> And I sit up–
> And I lean back–
> And I strike myself in the face.
> I punch myself hard.
> Again.
> And again.
> Not feeling nothing as I hit. […]
> And I reach back to punch myself again–
> But I switch off–
> I feel it go cold inside me–

Deep down inside–
(where are you to save me?)
I switch off.
I go numb.

<div align="right">(*Ask* 307)</div>

Similarly to the time he was consumed by rage towards Viola early on in *Knife* and punched himself in the face instead of inflicting violence on Viola, once again Todd's intense emotions of pain and upset find release in self-harm. Todd's first impulse when experiencing deep pain is violence, albeit against himself, but the second impulse is to shut down all feeling entirely. This repression of all emotion is directly linked to the loss of Viola, as she is no longer there to "save" him. As Todd shuts down his emotions, he thinks: "(but she's gone) (she's gone) And I'm dead. Inside, I'm dead dead dead. There ain't nothing left" (*Ask* 311). This directly demonstrates that without Viola, there is "nothing left" for Todd, nothing to keep him strong or support him – and nothing to hold him accountable for his actions.

When Viola comes to rescue Todd, he is incapable of letting go of the guilt for the things he did in her absence, saying: "No, it was easier when you weren't here. It was easier when you couldn't see–" (*Ask* 393). Todd is able to participate in the Mayor's misogynistic acts of dominance due to the fact that he feels betrayed by Viola's disappearance and her presumed involvement in the genocide of the Land. This is well aligned with hook's (2004, 70) suggestion that for men, committing the acts of violence demanded by the patriarchy, be it towards women, marginalised men or opponents in war, is easier if they have successfully suppressed their emotions. Violence and emotional disconnection are therefore closely linked, or as Pope and Englar-Carlson (2001, 368) point out: "Violence is the final step in a sequence that begins with this emotional disconnection." Todd is – at least on the surface – successful in doing so, and is therefore able to perform considerable acts of cruelty, even though he has been shown to be a kind, nonviolent character. Being physically and emotionally separated from his care circle causes Todd to revert to perpetuating toxic masculinity even more intensely than before. This turns into something of a self-fulfilling prophecy; losing his loved ones drives Todd to suppress his emotions and this suppression ends up alienating his loved ones even further. Disconnection begets disconnection and the cycle can be hard to break.

Todd's struggles with emotional expression and dealing with the demands of toxic masculinity find a mirror in Davy. In an interesting reversal, Todd and Davy end up briefly switching roles when it comes to performing toxic masculinity. Whereas Davy is initially positioned as the epitome of toxic masculinity; a violent, misogynistic bully, and Todd as his non-violent, empathetic counterpart, as both boys face more atrocities and violence, their ways of dealing with them send them on opposite trajectories. Davy begins to crack under the stress of facing the realities of war and having to participate in the oppression and violence orchestrated by his father, whereas Todd copes by suppressing his emotions and disconnecting himself from empathy and caring altogether. Davy goes as far to ask him:

> "How d'you *do* it?"
> "Do what?"
> I see him shrug in the dusk. "Be so calm bout it all. Be so, I don't know, *unfeeling*. I mean…" He drifts off and says, almost too quietly to hear, one more time, "when they cry."
> I don't say nothing cuz how can I help him?
>
> (*Ask* 362, emphases as in the original)

It is the Mayor's technique for silencing one's Noise that allows Todd to suppress his emotions, a technique which the Mayor never taught Davy. Todd's way of suppressing his emotions is shown to be deeply unhealthy, and it is made apparent that his disconnect is not the result of genuine lack of emotion or caring but of trauma, and simply an unhealthy coping mechanism to keep too intense feelings of pain and guilt at bay. More importantly, at its core, Todd's unfeeling exterior is little more than a facade. He projects indifference to the other characters and even, occasionally, to the reader, but it is always implied that this indifference is not an accurate reflection of his state of mind. The Mayor points this out at the end of *Ask*, saying:

> "But I've been watching you, Todd. The boy who can't kill another man. The boy who'd risk his own life to save his beloved Viola. The boy who felt so guilty at the horrible things he was doing that he tried to shut off all feeling. The boy who still felt every pain, every twitch of hurt he saw on the face of the women he banded."
> He leans down closer to my face. "The boy who refused to lose his soul." [...]
> "I've done bad things," I say and I don't even mean to say it.
> "But you *suffer* for them, Todd." His voice is softer now, almost tender. "You're your own worst enemy, punishing yourself far more than I could ever hope to. Men have Noise and the way they handle it is to make themselves just a little bit

dead, but *you*, even when you *want* to, you can't. More than any man I've ever met, Todd, you *feel*."

<div align="right">(*Ask* 457, emphases as in the original)</div>

While, by his own admission, Todd has "switched off" and become dead inside due to the loss of Viola and the trauma he has endured, the Mayor suggests that Todd has not truly succeeded in doing so. Todd *wants* not to feel anything, but fails to stop caring. In the end, the superficial numbing only intensifies the pain beneath it. Todd tries to prevent himself from caring as a coping method to deal with the pain and guilt he feels, but denying himself care and connection and committing acts that go against his caring nature only make the pain and guilt worse. It is only when he regains connection and trust in his care circle that Todd is able to stop repressing his emotions and open up again.

While this section focused mainly on Viola's influence, Ben also plays a significant part in shaping Todd's emotional expression and experience. Throughout *Ask*, Todd believes Ben to be dead, which causes him to rely exclusively on Viola for moral guidance and emotional support. Ben's absence does not affect Todd's behaviour as dramatically as Viola's does, but its significance is brought to sharp focus when the two are later reunited. In the following section, I examine Ben's influence on Todd's identity in particular, and how it is contrasted with the Mayor and his influence.

5.3 Paternal influence in shaping masculinity

Identity and self-image are not formed in a vacuum. Especially when it comes to preventing violent behaviour and emotional disconnection in boys, the example set by their fathers can be crucial. By breaking gender stereotypes in their own lives and modelling a wide variety of "male behaviours" fathers can help their sons see through the expectations set by society and give them strength to defy them. Therefore, in order to dismantle toxic masculinity, it is crucial that boys learn empathy, towards others as well as themselves, from their parental figures (Pope and Englar-Carlson 2001, 370).

In the context of *Chaos Walking*, the role of fatherhood is amplified further due to there being no women and thus no mothers in Prentisstown and in Todd and Davy's lives. Todd often thinks about his mother and carries her memory with him in the form of her journal, but he was raised by two men. Davy's mother is never so much as

mentioned or named in the story. This gives their father figures even more power over the development of their identities and conceptions of masculinity.

Throughout the trilogy, Todd has two extremely different father figures influencing his self-image and choices; his foster father Ben and Mayor Prentiss. Having lost his biological parents at a young age, Todd was raised by their friends Ben and Cillian, whom he initially describes as "more than "kinda like" [his parents] but less than actually being so" (*Knife* 34). Todd is very close with Ben, but does not get along with Cillian, who is strict and does not show affection openly, which leads Todd to think that he does not care for him despite Ben trying to convince him otherwise. Ben insists that Cillian fights with Todd because he cares about him, but Todd considers it "a funny way to show it, a way that don't seem much like caring at all, if you ask me" (*Knife* 34). Ben, in turn, is described by Todd as "a different kind of man than Cillian, a *kind* kind of man that makes him not normal in Prentisstown" (*Knife* 34, emphasis as in the original). Todd, in his own characteristically roundabout way, describes his sentiments towards Ben as follows:

> 'Cept for Ben, who I can't describe much further without seeming soft and stupid like a boy, so I won't, just to say that I never knew my pa, but if you woke up one day and had a choice of picking one from a selecshun [sic], if someone said, here, then, boy, pick who you want, then Ben wouldn't be the worst choice you could make that morning.
>
> (*Knife* 35)

After he is forced to flee Prentisstown in the beginning of *Knife*, Todd loses contact with Ben for a majority of the novel and believes him to be dead. They are reunited briefly on a few occasions, but are always driven apart by a new impending threat. In Ben's absence the role of a mentor is filled by Mayor Prentiss. Throughout the first novel, the Mayor is portrayed as a mysterious and threatening force and serves as the main antagonist. However, despite being chased, terrorised and tortured by the Mayor, Todd eventually ends up reluctantly working for him and throughout *Ask* and *Monsters* they end up becoming quite close, so much so that the Mayor eventually begins to consider Todd his son. For Todd, however, Ben is always the primary father figure.

In *Chaos Walking*, Ben represents the least toxic version of masculinity and, indeed, humanity in general. Ben is non-violent, communicates and expresses his feelings openly and does not place expectations of performing masculinity on Todd as he is growing up. Later, when Ben is left for dead by Davy, he is saved by the Land and

healed, which allows him to learn how to speak directly through his Noise as the Land do and therefore opens up his mind even further. Ben is shown to be understanding and empathetic towards most people and members of marginalised groups. This is likely partially due to the fact that Ben is part of such a group himself.

While the fact is never brought to the forefront of the narrative, Ben is gay. The nature of Ben and Cillian's relationship is left quite ambiguous in the text, especially within the first novel, which is the only one in which they both appear alive. In the sequels it is suggested more clearly that they are indeed a couple, but it is hinted at mostly through offhand comments which remain disputable – and indeed have been refuted or left unacknowledged by many readers. Ness himself confirmed in an interview that Ben and Cillian are a couple (Meisner 2013), but the ambiguity that exists on the textual level does slightly lessen the power of this statement.

Regardless, Ben is the male character who most openly defies rules and expectations of toxic masculinity, which reflects the fact that in many cultures homosexuality is considered to be in direct conflict with hegemonic masculinity (Connell [1995] 1999, 78; Hill Collins 2004, 192). It is also significant that Ben is by far the most positive father figure portrayed in the series. This is likely no coincidence, as data from studies examining gay fatherhood suggests that gay men are transforming the concepts of traditional fatherhood by "degendering" it, and in doing so widening the parameters of hegemonic masculinity (Schacher, Auerbach and Silverstein 2005, 47–48; Benson, Silverstein and Auerbach 2005, 3). In these studies, gay fathers were shown to incorporate "nurturing traits that included a wide range of emotional expression with partners and children" as they replaced the stereotypical unemotional, absent parenting mode with one built on commitment and care (Schacher, Auerbach and Silverstein 2005, 48).

While real life studies on gay fatherhood are not necessarily directly applicable to the fictional world of *Chaos Walking*, many of these aspects of non-traditional fatherhood are certainly consistent with Ben's character. Ben is undoubtedly the most nurturing and emotionally expressive adult present in Todd's life and as such stands out from most men Ben and Viola encounter on New World. Ben's approach to fatherhood, which is built on open communication and emotional expression, is therefore portrayed as conscious act of rebellion against the hegemonic masculinity which prioritises control and disconnection.

The link between marginalised masculinity and positive modes of fatherhood having been established, it is also worth noting that the other explicitly non-violent father figure in the story is a person of colour. Bradley, a new settler and Viola's former teacher who becomes her father figure in *Monsters* is, like Ben, committed to non-violence and aspires to pass on these values to Viola as well. Bradley's active pacifism sets him apart from most other male characters in the series, so much so that other men nickname him "the Humanitarian", which is certainly not meant as a compliment. Even though New World's society's attitudes towards queer people and people of colour are never explicitly addressed in the books, it is safe to assume that queerness and non-whiteness are in contradiction with the hegemonic values of a highly religious and patriarchal society and therefore marginalised at least to some degree. *Chaos Walking* makes a point of portraying such non-conforming approaches to masculinity in a positive light, setting Ben and Bradley as the aspirational, non-toxic role models that Todd and Viola need to rid themselves of the harmful praxes of New World.

Todd's other father figure, Mayor Prentiss, presents a very different kind of a role model. Overall, the Mayor's approach to fatherhood is at the very opposite end of the spectrum from Ben's. Whereas Ben's love for Todd is presented as unconditional, gentle and forgiving, the Mayor's affections and his approval of Todd and his own son Davy are always contingent on their performance and obedience. Davy is desperate for his father's approval, and his feelings of self-worth are directly contingent on the feedback he gets from his father and later from Todd. As demonstrated earlier in section 4.2, Davy often tries to use sexist speech and behaviour to earn approval from his father. He also works as the Mayor's sheriff and soldier and commits several violent acts on his behalf, although the Mayor, in turn, attempts to distance himself from these acts in order to win Todd's trust.

The contrast between the Mayor and Ben and their approaches to masculinity – and therefore influence on Todd – is most clearly demonstrated in their approach to the Noise. As established earlier, the Noise is an integral aspect of masculinity on New World. The way that different men respond to being forced to grant others access to their own thoughts and feelings is often speaks volumes of how they express and deal with their emotions and comes across in their behaviour towards others. Ben's Noise is described as gentler and less chaotic than that of most other men, particularly in Prentisstown. Already early in the beginning of *Knife*, Todd describes Ben's Noise as

"calmer and clearer" than Cillian's, "so smooth and non-grasping it's like laying down in a brook on a hot day" (*Knife* 33, 35). This could not be further from the Mayor's Noise, which he mostly keeps silent or uses to control others, but which he can also turn into a weapon by overwhelming another person's Noise with his own. Most often his weapon of choice is the phrase "YER NOTHING", which he uses fairly frequently to punish Davy – and occasionally Todd – for his transgressions. He also teaches Todd to silence his Noise and use it to control others. This is significant because by teaching Todd to silence his Noise the Mayor is also teaching him control, and through control disconnection and suppression; he is essentially teaching him toxic masculinity.

The silencing and weaponization of the Noise are the Mayor's tools for coping with the overwhelming amount of information the Noise forces upon everyone on New World, but it is precisely his need for control over the Noise that ends up driving him insane. The Mayor tells Todd:

> "War makes monsters of men, you once said to me, Todd. Well, so does too much knowledge. Too much knowledge of your fellow man, too much knowledge of his weakness, his pathetic greed and vanity, and how laughably easy it is to control him. [...] You know, Todd, it's only the stupid who can truly handle Noise. The sensitive, the *smart*, people like you and me, we *suffer* by it. And people like us *have* to control people like them. For their own good and ours."
>
> (*Monsters* 546, emphases as in the original)

The Mayor views the Noise and the information it provides both as a burden and as something that practically compels him to use it against others. The Mayor's perspective is directly oppositional to Ben's, a fact which the Mayor himself recognises, telling Todd: "He hears the voice of the planet, too, Todd, just like me. Just like you will eventually. But he lives within it, lets himself be part of it, lets himself ride the current of it without losing himself" (*Monsters* 564–565). These two opposing approaches to the Noise effectively represent the opposing approaches to masculinity that the two men embody.

Ben's return at the end of *Monsters* and its impact on Todd's Noise very clearly highlights the differences between the two paternal figures and further demonstrates the significance of care in forming masculinity. In Ben's absence Todd has somewhat unwittingly been affected by the Mayor to the point where he has begun to silence his Noise and use it to control others like the Mayor does, which effectively means both suppressing his emotions and using the emotional disconnect to manipulate others.

However, as soon as Ben returns, Todd's Noise opens up again. As Viola describes their reunion:

> And I see that Todd's reached Ben–
> See it like I'm right there–
> *Feel* it like I'm right there because Todd's own Noise has opened, as he's got farther away from the Mayor and closer to Ben, his own Noise is opening as wide as it used to be, opening with astonishment and joy and so much love you can hardly bear to look at it
>
> (*Monsters* 447, emphasis as in original)

The image of Todd's Noise opening up as he runs from the Mayor to Ben clearly demonstrates the influence each of them have on Todd. As he is reunited with Ben, Todd is also able to regain access to his emotions, which he has forced himself to suppress out of guilt and remorse. After the initial emotional turmoil of seeing Ben alive, Todd's Noise quiets down again, as Viola points out: "The farther Todd gets away from Ben, the quieter he is" (*Monsters* 461), but being reunited with Ben appears to have stabilised Todd's sense of self enough to prevent him from falling victim to the Mayor's manipulation again.

Ben's return brings the differences between him and the Mayor to stark contrast. When Todd and Ben are reunited, Todd is instantly affected by Ben's compassion and openness as Todd tells him of everything that has happened and is immediately forgiven:

> He forgives me for all of it, tells me I don't even need to be forgiven, tells me I did the best I could, that I made mistakes but that's what makes me human and that it's not the mistakes I made but how I responded to 'em and I can feel it from him, feel it from his Noise, telling me how I can stop now, how everything's gonna be all right– And I realize he ain't telling me with words. He's sending it right into the middle of my head, actually, no, he *ain't*, he's *surrounding* me with it, letting me sit in the middle of it, knowing it to be true, the forgiveness, the – and here's a word I don't even know but suddenly do – *absolushun*, absolushun from him if I want it, absolushun for everything–
>
> (*Monsters* 449, spelling and emphases as in the original)

Ben's caring and compassion immediately bring Todd back to himself and allows him to break free from the Mayor's influence. Ben's forgiveness is, as always, unconditional, and it is his absolution that finally allows Todd to let go of the tremendous guilt over his mistakes that he had been carrying. The Mayor, in turn, sheds his facade of caring very quickly as soon as he sees that Todd has shifted his allegiance

away from him and punishes this betrayal by essentially trying to destroy the entire world. He tells Todd:

> "All this time, you really believed you had the upper hand? […] And you know what? You *did*. You did have it. When you were acting like a proper son, I would have done anything you asked, Todd. I saved Viola, I saved this town, I fought for *peace*, all because you asked." […]
> "And then you saved my *life*, Todd," he says, still coming towards me. "You saved me instead of that woman and I thought, *He's with me. He's really with me. He really is all I've ever wanted in a son.*" […]
> "And then Ben comes to town," he says, a flash of fire in his voice. […]
> My stomach drops when I realize what he's done.
> "Not what *I've* done, Todd," he says, stepping right up to me. "What *you've* done. This is about what *you* have done."
> He raises the gun.
> "You broke my heart, Todd Hewitt," he says. "You broke a father's heart."
>
> (*Monsters* 470–471, emphases as in the original)

The Mayor blames Todd for the destruction he is about to instigate, as if it were Todd's duty to keep him from committing any more atrocities. Being heartbroken by losing Todd prompts the Mayor to punish him and the entire world. A direct parallel is created not long after, when Todd is fatally injured by 1017 and Ben rushes to his side. 1017 narrates:

> And [Ben's] heart is broken–
> Broken so much it infects everything, reaching out into the world beyond him–
> Because when the Land mourns, we mourn together–
> And his grief overwhelms me, becomes my own, becomes the Land's–
> And I see the full extent of my mistake–
>
> (*Monsters* 577)

Ben's grief at almost losing Todd directly affects others through his Noise and connection to the Land, but in a very different way than the Mayor's. The intensity of Ben's grief is enough to show 1017 the consequences of his hateful act, and despite his personal anguish, Ben is able to overcome his upset and see that getting revenge achieves nothing but destruction for the whole world. His grief – and therefore his caring – works as a uniting, healing force, instead of a force of destruction like the Mayor's.

While both Ben and the Mayor claim Todd as their son, but despite the extent of the influence the Mayor had on him, it is made apparent that Todd only ever saw one of them as his father:

"*You made your choice. Made it perfectly clear.*"

"It ain't about *choosing*! Ben's the only father I ever had–"

Which, as soon as it's outta my mouth, I know is the wrong thing to say cuz the Mayor's eyes go darker than I ever seen 'em, and when he speaks, it's like the black beyond coming down from above and outta his mouth.

"*I was your father too,*" he says. "*I formed you and taught you and you would not be who you are today if it weren't for me, Todd Hewitt.*"

<div align="right">(Monsters 484, emphases as in the original)</div>

The Mayor points to his influence on Todd as proof of his fatherhood, but in doing so he only highlights the difference between himself and Ben even further. For the Mayor, fatherhood is about "forming" Todd and Davy into what he wants them to be. Ben, on the other hand, never actively seeks to influence or change Todd through means other than unconditional love and support. For Ben, fatherhood and caring for Todd are cornerstones of his own masculinity, as he tells Todd:

"The only thing that makes me a man," Ben says, his voice steady as a rock, "is seeing you safely into becoming a man yerself."

"I ain't a man yet, Ben", I say, my throat catching (shut *up*). "I don't even know how many days I got left." [...]

"Sixteen," he says. "Sixteen days till yer birthday." He takes my chin and lifts it. "But you've been a man for a good while now. Don't let *no one* tell you otherwise."

<div align="right">(Knife 399, emphases as in the original)</div>

For Ben, Todd's manhood is not contingent on his age or his ability to conform to the expectations of Prentisstown, but something that he has earned independently of any requirements placed on him and through being forced to make difficult choices and learning to let go of his misconceptions.

At the end of *Monsters*, the fate of the world comes down to the final confrontation between Todd and the Mayor. It is noteworthy that the battle between them is not fought with weapons and physical violence, but it is rather a literal battle of minds, as they each try to overpower the other with their Noise. In the end, Todd comes very close to defeating the Mayor and killing him by forcing him into the ocean, but they Mayor stops him and chooses instead to walk to his death willingly, sparing him from being forced to kill and in doing so becoming more like the Mayor, saying:

"But Todd Hewitt," he says, "you're the boy who couldn't kill."

"I ain't no boy," I say. "And I'll kill *you*."

"I know," he says. "And that would make you just a little bit more like me, wouldn't it?"

<div align="right">(Monsters 564, emphasis as in the original)</div>

The Mayor's decision to 'save' Todd from having to kill him is his final and only true act of kindness towards him and a sign of hope for the future of not only Todd but for New World at large. Before he walks to his death, the Mayor tells Todd and Viola: "'This world will be shaped by the two of you for years to come, Todd.' He sighs deeply. 'And I, for one,' he says, 'am glad that I shall never have to see it'" (*Monsters* 565). The Mayor's death symbolises the end of not only his reign, but also the reign of the kind of masculinity that he represents. A society built on the pacifistic and communicative philosophy of Ben, Todd and Viola will have no room for the manipulative, controlling and – in more ways than one – close-minded approach to masculinity and power practiced by the Mayor and his kind. His final words form a direct parallel with his words to Todd at the beginning of *Ask,* when he tries to persuade Todd to join his side: "We are making a new world. This planet finally and truly living up to its name. Believe me when I say, once you see it, you'll *want* to be part of it" (*Ask* 18, emphasis as in the original). The Mayor is certain Todd will see the merits of the world he intends to create, but just as Todd spent his boyhood not fitting in in the chaotic and violent Prentisstown, in the course of the series he grows up to be the kind of man who would never fit in in a world built on oppression, cruelty and control.

At the very end of the novel, Viola muses:

> I watch Ben these days and I wonder if I'm watching the future of New World, if every man will eventually give himself over so totally to the voice of the planet, keeping his individuality but allowing in all the individualities of everyone else at the same time and willingly joining the Spackle, joining the rest of the world.

<div align="right">(Monsters 589–590)</div>

This is mode of masculinity described by Viola is the exact antithesis of hegemonic and toxic masculinity. It is a masculinity built not on hierarchies and exclusions but instead on absolute inclusion and openness both emotionally and culturally. This is the potential society that Ben represents and that Todd comes to promote; a society built on open communication between peoples and species, free emotional expression and non-violence. In other words, a society built not on hegemony but on care.

6 Conclusion

The glaring absence of alternative images of masculinity offered to boys in literature, as identified by bell hooks, was brought into sharp focus when I first read *Chaos Walking*. The series' open engagement with themes of toxic masculinity caught me by surprise, as it was something I had not seen so directly handled in dystopian YA fiction before. While male characters rejecting expectations of traditional masculinity is not necessarily new, the way *Chaos Walking* explicitly addresses the stress and trauma experienced by boys forced to conform to them is still quite exceptional. Rigid formations of masculinity not only keep men and boys from openly sharing their emotions, but also keep them from addressing those very structures of masculinity that isolate and restrict them in the first place. Therefore, the power and opportunity to initiate such conversations lies in literature.

Chaos Walking approaches the impacts of hegemonic and toxic masculinity from two angles; the societal structures and cultural attitudes that shape our conceptions, and the identities and images of self that, in turn, shape how we view and interact with the world. It is at the intersection between these two spheres that the masculinity is constructed – and reconstructed. Todd lives in a deeply patriarchal world, his own town being among the most toxic manifestations of the conservative, hegemonic culture of New World, but Todd himself is shown to be caring and gentle. This conflict between Todd's identity and the requirements of his society threatens his sense of self but also sets him on a journey towards a new cohesive masculinity independent of the limitations of hegemony. Whether it is the murderous masculinity cult of Prentisstown or the condescending and conventional patriarchy of Carbonel Downs, Todd fails – or refuses – to conform to any society built on male supremacy.

Todd's journey from an obsession with toxic masculinity to embracing a form of masculinity fully devoid of hegemony is not a simple one, nor is it a journey he is able to complete on his own. I argue that it is only through learning to care for and be cared for by people close to him that Todd is able to repair his fractured image of self and rid himself of the toxic ideas foisted on him by society. Todd learning how to be cared *for* by others is especially important as being able to receive care requires admitting vulnerability and accepting support, acts which go directly against the tenets of toxic masculinity. This is well demonstrated in the series, as Todd's crisis of masculinity

deepens the more he denies himself vulnerability and connection. Todd's journey goes to show that modes of masculinity are deeply embedded in our societies and that subverting them comes down to more than the actions or attitudes of any individual man or woman. When left alone to struggle under the manipulation of the Mayor, who represents the power of toxic and hegemonic masculinity, it is easy for Todd to fall back on his regressive habits and attitudes. It is only through the unrelenting caring interventions of Viola and Ben that Todd is able to break free from them once and for all, and this shows the true power of caring in subverting toxic masculinity. In societies where hegemonic masculinity is built on toxic principles, it takes a radical reformation of moral priorities to shift the paradigm, and this is what Todd, Ben and Viola are able to set in motion in the world of *Chaos Walking*.

While fiction may often appear like a separate sphere entirely disconnected from the real-life structures of power and gender politics, the influence of literature – particularly literature aimed at a younger audience – in shaping gender roles and conventions of femininity and masculinity ought not to be underestimated. YA dystopias, in particular, are in a powerful position when it comes to criticising and deconstructing structures of gender and gender expression. Dystopian narratives give adolescent characters – and by proxy their adolescent readers – agency and power to rise up against the totalitarian regimes that control their self-expression and their relationships and therefore also the power to redefine gender non-conforming traits and behaviours as revolutionary. It is for this reason that series such as *Chaos Walking* that endeavour to shine a light on the potentially destructive effects of restrictive gender roles and offer positive alternatives are vital in introducing such change to the real world as well.

While in YA narratives this revolutionary power is often portrayed through romantic relationships – and often only through conventional heterosexual relationships – themes of gender, masculinity and femininity also play a significant part in these revolutions. Male characters who are allowed to feel and express a full range of emotions – including fear, pain and grief – to communicate openly with their loved ones and to reject violence and sexual objectification of women without losing their heroism and without facing disdain or rejection from others help widen the parameters of masculinity and present alternatives to strict gender roles for readers of all ages and genders. Furthermore, characters like Todd, who openly struggle with meeting their

society's extremely strict requirements of masculinity, shine a light on the challenge many men face in having to choose between conforming to a mode of gender they are not comfortable with and rejecting such requirements at the risk of banishment from the hegemonic group. Todd emerges from this struggle with a cohesive self-image and confidence in his own mode of masculinity, but only due to the unwavering support and guidance provided by his care circle. Care and connection are therefore crucial in helping men and boys rid themselves of toxic conceptions and expectations of masculinity.

While much research has already been done on themes of gender in YA literature and dystopias in particular, there certainly remains more to say on the topic, and as the literary field evolves to be more inclusive and subversive, so must the research evolve to take into account new facets of such gendered representations. Despite the progressive and versatile representations of gender seen in works of dystopian YA fiction, the genre still remains overwhelmingly white, heterosexual and cisgender, and any examinations of the genre remain short-sighted as long as these aspects and the ways they intersect with gender are ignored. Allowing male and female protagonists to express their gender in various non-hegemonic ways is significant, but if said protagonists are not also allowed to be non-heterosexual, non-white, or transgender, the reach of their revolutionary impact is limited, and this is something that ought to be taken into account when examining such stories.

Despite the current shortcomings of the genre, I remain optimistic about the future of YA dystopia and the revolutionary power it possesses. YA fiction is at the forefront of the current literary movement that is questioning and breaking limitations placed on the experiences and expressions of gender, and as the field continues to open up to new, more diverse voices it also opens up possibilities for even more radical and subversive explorations of gender and masculinity. Dystopian fiction, despite its bleak outlook on the world, offers countless opportunities for deconstructing – and dismantling – the pervasive gendered structures of our society and even imagining a world entirely devoid of such restrictions. The dystopian genre resonates with adolescent readers because of the ways it reflects the present state of the world and their experiences in it, but within these dystopian narratives there also lies the promise of change in the future. And who better to bring about that different future than the children and young adults of today?

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Appendix 1: Finnish summary

Tutkielmani käsittelee Patrick Nessin *Chaos Walking* -trilogiaa, joka koostuu teoksista *The Knife of Never Letting Go* (2008), *The Ask and the Answer* (2009), ja *Monsters of Men* (2010). Trilogia käsittelee laajoja yhteiskunnallisia teemoja, kuten sotaa, yksilöllisiä ja kulttuurillisia traumoja, sekä kostoa ja anteeksiantoa. Trilogia kuuluu lasten- ja nuortenkirjallisuuden genreen, sekä tieteisfiktion ja tarkemmin rajattuna dystopiakirjallisuuden piiriin. Kuten monet muutkin aikalaisensa dystopiakirjallisuuden kentällä, *Chaos Walking* nostaa etualalle sukupuoliroolien ja -identiteettien teemoja ja erityisesti maskuliinisuuteen liittyviä kysymyksiä. Tutkielmani rakentuu näiden kysymysten ympärille.

      Chaos Walking -trilogia sijoittuu vieraalle planeetalle nimeltään yksinkertaisesti 'New World', Uusi Maailma, joka on maan kaltainen, mutta jossa miesten ja eläinten ajatukset kuuluvat ääneen muiden mielissä ilmiössä jota kutsutaan nimellä 'the Noise', Melu. Naisten ajatuksia kyseinen ilmiö sen sijaan ei välitä, mikä osaltaan vaikutti planeetan yhteiskuntien muodostumiseen ja sukupuolten välisiin jännitteisiin. Planeettaa asuttaa myös alien-rotu. jonka kanssa uudisasukkaat ajautuvat hyvin nopeasti sotaan, kauaskantoisin seurauksin.

      Sarjan päähenkilö Todd on aikuisuuden kynnyksellä oleva poika, joka odottaa päivää jolloin hänestä tulee kylänsä tapojen mukaisesti mies. Toddin status Prentisstownin viimeisenä poikana ja hänen kykenemättömyytensä toteuttaa vaadittua miehuuden mallia aiheuttaa hänessä syvää ahdistusta, joka määrittää hänen identiteettiään valtaosan tarinasta. Toddin suhde omiin maskuliinisuuden käsityksiinsä ja yhteiskunnan mieheydelle asettamiin vaatimuksiin on yksi tarinan keskeisistä teemoista. Tutkielmassani tarkastelen kuinka *Chaos Walking* kyseenalaistaa toksisen maskuliinisuuden ja tarjoaa sille vaihtoehdoksi toisenlaisen maskuliinisuuden mallin, joka perustuu hallitsemisen ja alistamisen sijaan välittämiseen ja huolenpitoon.

      Lähestyn tutkimusaihettani maskuliinisuustutkimuksen ja feministisen teorian näkökulmasta. Maskuliinisuustutkimuksen tavoite on tutkia miehiä ja maskuliinisuutta kriittisesti ja sukupuolittuneina kategorioina jotka ovat rinnastettavissa naisiin ja feminiinisyyteen, sen sijaan että ne nähtäisiin neutraaleina ja normatiivisina ihmisyyden standardeina. Maskuliinisuustutkimus keskittyy näin ollen erityisesti yhteiskunnallisten valtarakenteiden nimeämiseen ja purkamiseen (Hearn and Collinson 1994, 98). Maskuliinisuustutkimuksen ja feministisen teorian yhteinen historia on pitkä ja

jännitteinen, mutta ristiriidoista huolimatta ne ovat tiiviisti toisiinsa sitoutuneita tutkimussuuntauksia, mistä syystä niitä on mielestäni tärkeää käsitellä yhdessä. Sukupuoliroolit ja patriarkaaliset rajoitukset ja vaatimukset vahingoittavat miehiä siinä missä naisiakin, ja on näin ollen niiden valta-aseman kyseenalaistaminen ja purkaminen on molempien ryhmien edun mukaista.

Yksi maskuliinisuustutkimuksen keskeisistä käsitteistä on hegemoninen maskuliinisuus. Raewyn Connellin kehittämä termi kuvaa kulttuurillisesti hallitsevaa ja yhteiskunnallisesti hyväksyttyä maskuliinisuuden muotoa, ja sitä ylläpitäviä rakenteita. Hegemoninen maskuliinisuus on muuttuva käsite, jonka tarkoitus on kuvata tiettynä aikana vallitsevaa tilaa ja se voi vaihdella aikakausien ja yhteisöjen välillä. Termi ei siis kuvaa mitään tiettyjä maskuliinisuuden ominaisuuksia, vaan maskuliinisuuden yhteiskunnallisia ja kulttuurillisia rakenteita. Lähtökohtaisesti hegemoninen maskuliinisuus kuitenkin perustuu tietyn miesryhmän aseman vahvistamiseen muita ryhmiä sortamalla, mistä johtuen se rakentuu usein kontrastissa naisiin, seksuaalivähemmistöihin ja rodullistettuihin ryhmiin.

Vaikka hegemoninen maskuliinisuus ei terminä viittaa mihinkään nimettyihin ominaisuuksiin tai käytösmalleihin, sitä käytetään usein virheellisesti nimittäjänä väkivaltaiselle, naisvihamieliselle ja dominoivalle maskuliinisuudelle. Näitä ominaisuuksia kuvaa kuitenkin paremmin käsite toksinen maskuliinisuus. Toksinen maskuliinisuus rakentuu miesten valtaa aggressiivisesti ylläpitävien piirteiden ympärille, piirteiden kuten naisviha ja naisten alistaminen, homofobia, rasismi ja väkivaltaisuus. Toksisen maskuliinisuuden teoria ei väitä kaiken maskuliinisuuden olevan toksista, vaan sillä pyritään irrottamaan toksiset ominaisuudet maskuliinisuuden muista määreistä. On myös tärkeää huomioida että vaikka hegemoninen ja toksinen maskuliinisuus eivät ole synonyymejä, ne ovat usein sidoksissa toisiinsa, sillä monissa yhteiskunnissa hegemoninen maskuliinisuus rakentuu vahvasti naisten ja vähemmistöryhmien alistamiselle. Toksinen maskuliinisuus voi olla hegemonian ilmentymä tai työkalu, mutta ne eivät ole yksi ja sama asia.

Yksi tehokkaimmista työkaluista toksisen maskuliinisuuden vastustamiseen on feministinen välittämisen etiikka. Välittäminen terminä pitää sisällään monenlaisia merkityksiä ja se saattaa viitata monenlaisiin arvoihin ja toimintaan, mutta tässä tutkielmassa määritän välittämisen tunnesiteinä ja suhteina joihin liittyy emotionaalista kiintymystä ja läheisyyttä, keskinäistä riippuvuuden ja vastuun tunnetta ja jotka sitovat yksilöitä sekä toisiinsa että ihmiskuntaan laajemmin (Hanlon 2012, 42). Välittämisen

etiikka perustuu Carol Gilliganin käsitteeseen. Gilliganin mukaan moraalietiikassa naisia pidettiin vähemmän lahjakkaina moraalisina ajattelijoina kuin miehiä, koska heidän moraalinsa perustui välittämiseen oikeuden sijaan. Gilliganin väite oli, että tällainen ensisijaisesti naisten edustama välittämiseen perustuva etiikka ei ole vähempiarvoisempaa kuin rationaalinen oikeuteen perustuva etiikka jota pidettiin miehille tyypillisenä, ainoastaan erilaista.

Gilliganin teoriaa on kritisoitu viime vuosikymmenten aikana runsaasti. Teoriaa pidetään essentialistisena, sillä se antaa ymmärtää että välittäminen on naisille ominainen eettinen näkökulma ja näin ollen suoraan sidoksissa sukupuoleen. Lisäksi Gilliganin tutkimusmetodit ovat osoittautuneet puutteellisiksi. On silti tärkeää huomioida, että vaikka Gilliganin teoriaan kohdistuu myös aiheellista kritiikkiä, merkittävä osa sen osakseen saamasta vastustuksesta kumpuaa myös antifeministisistä motiiveista. Itse pidän Gilliganin teoriaa puutteistaan huolimatta käyttökelpoisena lähtöpisteenä feministiselle moraalikäsitykselle. Vaikka välittäminen ei ole suoraan kytköksissä sukupuoleen, naisilta odotetaan yhteiskunnassa enemmän välittämistä ja huolenpitoa, mikä tekee välittämisestä sukupuolitetun ominaisuuden. Välittämistä ja huolenpitoa myös lähtökohtaisesti väheksytään miehissä niiden feminiinisten konnotaatioiden vuoksi. Näin ollen paras lähestymistapa välittämisen etiikkaan on feministinen tulkinta, jonka ytimessä on ajatus siitä, että välittämisen pitäisi olla eettinen prioriteetti kaikille, ei vain naisille. Feministinen välittämisen etiikka on myös vastalause toksiselle maskuliinisuudelle, sillä naisista ja heidän kohtaamastaan sorrosta välittäminen auttaa purkamaan toksisia ja sortavia asenteita ja käytösmalleja. Myös miesten tulisi saada ilmaista välittävänsä toisistaan ja saada huolenpitoa toisiltaan, ei vain naisilta ja siten nousta rajoittavia sukupuolistereotypioita vastaan.

Nuorten aikuisten dystopianarratiivit ovat erinomaisia välikappaleita sukupuolen teemojen käsittelyyn. Nuorten aikuisten dystopiakertomukset perustuvat lähtökohtaisesti sortavien valtarakenteiden vastustamiselle ja niiden päähenkilöt toteuttavat sukupuolta usein normista poikkeavilla tavoilla ja samalla esittävät välittämisen ja huolenpidon vallankumouksellisina ominaisuuksina. Koska välittäminen ja huolenpito nähdään ensisijaisesti feminiinisinä ominaisuuksina, niiden esittäminen positiivisina ja vallankumouksellisina naishahmoissa on merkittävää, mutta kenties vielä merkittävämpää on samojen arvojen korostaminen mieshahmoissa.

Chaos Walkingissa maskuliinisuuden ja välittämisen suhde on ehdottomasti yksi tarinan keskeisimpiä teemoja. Lähestyn tutkielmassani maskuliinisuuden teemoja

kahdesta suunnasta; ensinnäkin tarkastelen maskuliinisuuden yhteiskunnallisia rakenteita ja niiden vaikutusta Toddin identiteettiin ja toisekseen Toddin sisäisiä kokemuksia maskuliinisuudesta ja niiden vaikutuksia hänen käytökseensä ja minäkuvaansa.

Toddin kasvuympäristön käsitykset maskuliinisuudesta ovat voimakkaan hegemoniset ja poikkeuksellisen toksiset. Planeetan eri yhteisöissä vallitsee erilaiset hegemoniat, mutta monet niistä hyödyntävät samoja keinoja hegemonisen maskuliinisuuden ylläpitämiseen. Ensimmäinen keino on rajattujen sukupuoliroolien ylläpitäminen säännösten ja stereotypioiden kautta. Valtaosassa planeetan yhteisöistä yhteiskunnallinen valta on miesten käsissä, kun taas naiset on rajattu kodin piiriin ja heidän ensisijainen roolinsa on olla vaimoja ja äitejä. Toddin kotikylässä Prentisstownissa kaikki naiset on tapettu, mutta sukupuolikuria ylläpidetään silti tiukasti, mistä syystä Violan kohtaaminen on Toddille suuri järkytys. Viola ei vastaa Toddin käsitystä tytöistä ja naisista, jotka ovat tähän asti olleet hänelle lähes fiktiivisiä olentoja, olemassa vain opetusvideoissa ja miesten ajatuksissa. Oppiessaan tuntemaan Violan paremmin, Todd joutuu kyseenalaistamaan oppimiaan käsityksiä naisista. Kasvuympäristöstään huolimatta Todd ei suhtaudu Violaan avoimen alistavasti tai vähättelevästi, mutta Viola edustaa Toddille vierasta maailmaa ja uhkaa hänen käsityksilleen maailmasta, ja alkuun Toddin ennakkoluulot ja ymmärtämättömyys tekevät heidän väleistään kireät.

Ajan myötä ystävyys Violan kanssa sekä erilaiset yhteisöt joita he matkallaan kohtaavat pakottavat Toddin kohtaamaan ennakkoluulonsa ja laajentamaan käsityksiään miesten ja naisten rooleista ja asemista yhteiskunnassa. Heidän ystävyytensä seurauksena Todd alkaa myös avoimesti puolustaa Violaa muiden miesten edessä, mikä osoittaa että muista välittäminen voi kannustaa miehiä aktiivisesti vastustamaan toksista maskuliinisuutta. Henkilökohtaiset, huolenpitoon perustuvat suhteet eivät automaattisesti muuta maailmaa, mutta ne voivat johtaa välittävään käytökseen ja siten konkreettiseen poliittiseen muutokseen.

Toinen toksista hegemonista maskuliinisuutta tukeva rakenne on naisiin kohdistuva väkivalta ja seksualisoiminen. Hegemoninen maskuliinisuus pyrkii vahvistamaan asemaansa heikentämällä muiden ryhmien asemaa, ja äärimmillään tämä manifestoituu naisiin kohdistuvana, usein seksuaalisena, väkivaltana. Todd itse kuvataan pohjimmiltaan vaarattomana hahmona joka ei ole uhka naisille, mutta tarinan aikana hänkin osallistuu naisia sortaviin toimenpiteisiin osana pormestari Prentissin

poliittista kampanjaa. Toddin hahmolle luodaan kontrastia pormestarin pojan Davy Prentiss Jr.:in avulla. Davy on avoimen halventava naisia kohtaan ja korostaa seksin tärkeyttä maskuliinisuuden muodostamisessa. Davy käyttää seksualisoivaa, misogynististä kieltä sekä uhkailukeinona että toisaalta myös keinona vahvistaa ystävyyssuhdettaan Toddin kanssa. Naisten ja muiden sorrettujen ryhmien alistaminen on Davyn keino vahvistaa omaa maskuliinisuuttaan muiden silmissä, mikä kertoo paljon hänen kasvuympäristöstään ja oppimistaan maskuliinisuuden malleista. Davy ja Todd ovat kasvaneet samassa yhteisössä, mutta Davy on omaksunut Prentisstownin toksisen maskuliinisuuden mallin vielä syvemmin kuin Todd. Suurin vaikuttaja Davyn käytökseen on hänen isänsä, pormestari Prentiss, joka pyrkii antamaan itsestään kuvan epätoksisena ja naisille sympaattisena hahmona, mutta joka mahdollistaa naisiin kohdistuvan sorron ja väkivallan poliittisilla toimillaan ja antamalla valtaa väkivaltaisille, toksista maskuliinisuutta avoimesti toteuttaville miehille.

Kolmas keino ylläpitää hegemonista maskuliinisuutta yhteiskunnassa on rodullistettujen ryhmien sortaminen. *Chaos Walkingin* maailmassa rodullistettua toiseutta edustaa planeetan alkuperäislaji, joka kutsuu itseään nimellä 'the Land', Maa. Alienien käyttäminen vertauskuvana todelliselle rasismille ja kolonialistiselle sorrolle on yleinen ilmiö tieteisfiktion kentällä, ja vaikka se tarjoaa mahdollisuuksia rasismin käsittelyyn, se päätyy myös usein vahvistamaan rasistisia stereotypioita niiden kyseenalaistamisen sijaan.

Todd on kasvanut siinä uskossa että alienit olivat vastuussa koko planeetan naisten kuolemasta, Toddin äiti mukaan lukien. Vaikka Todd myöhemmin oppii uskomustensa olevan valheellisia, hänen suhtautumisensa on koko tarinan ajan vahvasti pelon ja vihan värittämää, mikä heijastuu myös hänen käytökseensä alieneita kohtaan. Todd murhaa ensimmäisen kohtaamansa alienin todistaakseen maskuliinisuutensa, mutta ymmärtää pian tekonsa vääräksi ja siitä kumpuava syyllisyys vaikuttaa hänen tekoihinsa koko tarinan ajan. Violan vaikutuksen ansiosta Todd yrittää päästä yli pelostaan ja ennakkoluuloistaan, mutta päätyy silti palaamaan vihamielisiin käytösmalleihinsa ja purkamaan omasta syyllisyydestä ja identiteettikriisistään kumpuavan turhautumisensa alieneihin. Todd ei koskaan kykene täysin luopumaan peloistaan ja epävarmuudestaan alienien suhteen, mutta Violan ja Benin vaikutuksesta oppii ymmärtämään tekojensa julmuuden ja vääryyden ja lakkaa hyödyntämästä rasistista sortoa oman maskuliinisuutensa vahvistamiseen.

Yhteiskunnallisten rakenteiden lisäksi toksisen maskuliinisuuden teemoja käsitellään myös Toddin sisäisen kokemuspiirin kautta. Toddin identiteetti on ristiriitainen, hän on lapsuuden ja aikuisuuden rajamaastossa ja yrittää rakentaa ehjää minäkuvaa oman luonteensa ja yhteiskunnan odotusten ristiaallokossa. Toddin yhteisön luoma kuva maskuliinisuudesta rakentuu väkivaltaisuuden ja tappamisen ympärille, ja hänen kykenemättömyytensä täyttää näitä vaatimuksia aiheuttaa Toddissa voimakasta ahdistusta ja epävarmuutta. Prentisstownin perinteen mukaan pojan on mieheksi tullakseen tapettava toinen mies, ja tämän vaatimuksen luoma paine värittää Toddin käytöstä ja asenteita koko tarinan ajan. Todd on alusta asti vastentahtoinen käyttämään väkivaltaa edes tilanteissa joissa se olisi tarpeellista, mikä uhkaa hänen käsitystään omasta maskuliinisuudestaan. Tämän ahdistuksen ajamana Todd päätyy murhaamaan yhden alieneista, mutta kyseinen teko monimutkaistaa Toddin suhdetta väkivaltaisuuteen ja tappamiseen entisestään, vahvistaen hänelle langetettua identiteettiä ”poikana, joka ei voi tappaa”.

On tärkeää huomioida, että toksisen maskuliinisuuden odotusten lisäksi osa Toddin halusta olla kykeneväinen väkivaltaan kumpuaa välittämisestä. Todd haluaa pystyä puolustamaan läheisiään ja kokee että jos hän pystyisi tappamaan, hänen rakkaansa eivät olisi vaarassa tai joutuisi kärsimään. Tämä on melko yleinen teema nuorten aikuisten dystopiakirjallisuudessa, jossa väkivalta on usein välttämätön osa vallankumousta, ja siten joskus hyväksyttävää. Yleensä raja vedetään kuitenkin murhaan. Onkin merkittävää, että Todd ei murhaa alienia suojellakseen Violaa vaan suoraan oman uhatun maskuliinisuutensa seurauksena, ja sekä muut hahmot että Todd itse esittävät teon tuomittavana. Lisäksi kyky suojella muita fyysisen väkivallan keinoin on myös osa hegemonisen maskuliinisuuden vaatimuksia, joten vaikka Toddin motivaatio kumpuaa välittämisestä, se ei silti ole täysin moraalisesti pyyteetön pyrkimys.

Vaikka välittäminen motivoi Toddin tarvetta kyetä väkivaltaan, on erittäin merkittävää että välittäminen päätyy vastavuoroisesti myös ohjaamaan Toddia poispäin väkivaltaisesta maskuliinisuudesta ja Prentisstownin tappamisen kultista. Toisin kuin yhteiskunnalliset auktoriteettihahmot, kuten pormestari Prentiss, Viola ja Ben pitävät Toddin väkivallattomuutta arvossa ja kannustavat häntä olemaan taipumatta painostuksen alla. Benin ja Violan välittämisen kautta Todd omaksuu heidän arvonsa ja oppii irrottamaan omatunnonarvonsa toksisen maskuliinisuuden väkivallan vaatimuksista.

Tappamisen merkitys maskuliinisuudelle korostuu erityisen voimakkaasti sodan kontekstissa. Tämä on keskeinen teema sarjan kolmannessa osassa, jossa Todd joutuu keskelle ihmisten ja alienien välistä sotaa. Pormestari Prentiss pitää sotaa siirtymäriittinä mieheyteen, mutta Toddille sota on traumaattinen kokemus, joka johtaa entistä suurempaan ahdistukseen. Se ajaa Toddin tukahduttamaan tunteitaan ja ajatuksiaan, mikä puolestaan vaikuttaa hänen välittämissuhteisiinsa.

Tunteiden tukahduttaminen on yksi toksisen maskuliinisuuden keskeisimmistä vaatimuksista. Toksisen hegemonisen maskuliinisuuden vaatimusten mukaan miehet eivät saa ilmaista tunteitaan avoimesti, etenkään surua tai pelkoa, joiden ilmaiseminen nähdään heikkouden merkkinä ja yhdistetään feminiinisyyteen. Ainoa miehille hyväksytty tunteiden ilmaisun muoto on viha ja raivo. Miesten odotetaan siten kykenevän hallitsemaan tunteitaan ja kestämään niitä ilman tukea tai saamatta jakaa niitä läheistensä kanssa.

Todd on alusta asti vastentahtoinen ilmaisemaan surua tai pelkoa, ja tilanteissa joissa ne nousevat pintaan, hän reagoi puolustelevasti ja turhautuneesti. Todd pitää pelkoa ja surua merkkeinä maskuliinisen performanssin epäonnistumisesta, ja ne herättävät hänessä häpeää, joka puolestaan ruokkii toksista maskuliinisuutta entisestään. Todd joutuu kokemaan useita traumaattisia tapahtumia, joiden seurauksena hän alkaa tukahduttaa sekä tunteitaan että Meluaan selviytymiskeinona. Tämä on merkki Toddin korostuneesta kontrollin tarpeesta, joka pahimmillaan saa Toddin käyttäytymään kontrolloivasti ja jopa väkivaltaisesti muita kohtaan. Turtuneessa tilassaan Todd osallistuu pormestari Prentissin julman diktatuurin ylläpitämiseen auttamalla tätä sortamaan niin naisia kuin alieneitakin. Todd oppii myös käyttämään Meluaan muiden hallitsemiseen. Kaikki mainitut käyttäytymismallit ovat tyypillisiä toksiselle maskuliinisuudelle, mikä osoittaa suoran yhteyden tunteiden ja välittämisen tukahduttamisen ja toksisen maskuliinisuuden välillä.

Toddin tunteellinen avoimuus tai tukahtuneisuus on suorassa yhteydessä hänen välittämissuhteidensa tilaan. Joutuessaan eroon rakkaistaan, Todd menettää yhteyden omiin tunteisiinsa ja moraalinsa, ja tunteiden tukahduttaminen vuorostaan päätyy etäännyttämään häntä läheisistään entisestään. Välittäminen on kuitenkin avainasemassa myös Toddin kyvyssä avata mielensä ja tunteensa uudelleen. Benin ja Violan tuki ja huolenpito motivoivat Toddia ilmaisemaan tunteensa avoimemmin, ja siten torjumaan toksisen maskuliinisuuden vaatimukset täydellisestä kontrollista ja emotionaalisesta etäisyydestä.

Isähahmojen vaikutus poikien maskuliinisuuden kokemuksiin ja malleihin on erittäin merkittävä, etenkin mitä tulee toksisten mallien purkamiseen. Kannustamalla poikiaan empatiaan ja välittämiseen, isät voivat osaltaan heikentää toksisen maskuliinisuuden hegemoniaa. Tämä näkyy selvästi myös *Chaos Walkingissa*, jossa isähahmojen merkitys on poikkeuksellisen korostettu, koska kaikki Prentisstownin naiset ovat kuolleet mistä syystä sekä Todd että Davy ovat kasvaneet ilman äitihahmoja.

Toddilla on sarjan aikana kaksi hyvin erilaista isähahmoa; hänen kasvatti-isänsä Ben, sekä pormestari Prentiss, jonka palvelukseen Todd vastentahtoisesti päätyy sarjan toisessa ja kolmannessa osassa. Ben ja pormestari Prentiss lähestyvät maskuliinisuutta täysin päinvastaisista lähtökohdista, mikä heijastuu myös heidän lähestymistapoihinsa isyyteen ja siten Toddiin. Ben edustaa sarjassa toksisen maskuliinisuuden absoluuttista vastakohtaa. Hän ei ole väkivaltainen tai dominoiva ja ilmaisee tunteitaan ja välittämistä avoimesti. Hän ei myöskään aseta vaatimuksia Toddin maskuliinisuuden tai identiteetin suhteen. On tärkeää huomioida, että Ben kuuluu seksuaalivähemmistöön ja on parisuhteessa miehen kanssa, ja edustaa siten lähtökohtaisesti marginalisoitua maskuliinisuutta. Marginalisoituihin ryhmiin kuuluvat miehet edustavat usein hyvin epähegemonista maskuliinisuutta ja auttavat siten osaltaan purkamaan hegemonian valtarakenteita. On merkittävää, että Benin vaihtoehtoinen maskuliinisuus kuvataan sarjassa yksinomaan positiivisena ja tavoiteltavana standardina. Tämä asettaa toksisen maskuliinisuuden negatiiviseen valoon ja osoittaa välittämisen ja välittävän maskuliinisuuden olevan toksisuuden vasta-aine.

Toddin toinen keskeinen isähahmo on pormestari Prentiss, sarjan ensisijainen antagonisti, joka luo vastakohdan Benin edustamalle maskuliinisuudelle. Pormestari Prentiss on sarjan vaikutusvaltaisin hahmo, jonka vaikutus maskuliinisuuden standardeihin on merkittävä. Prentisstownin murharituaali, joka edellyttää pojilta tappamista tullakseen hyväksytyiksi miehinä, on hänen käytäntönsä, ja samoin myös Havenin kaupungissa tapahtuvat naisiin ja alieneihin kohdistuvat vihakampanjat ovat hänen aikaansaannoksiaan. Hänellä on myös suuri vaikutus Toddiin ja hänen käsityksiinsä maskuliinisuudesta. Vaikka Todd suhtautuu pormestari Prentissiin epäluuloisesti ja suostuu yhteistyöhön tämän kanssa vastentahtoisesti, heidän välilleen muodostuu side, joka päätyy muuttamaan kumpaakin syvästi. Pormestari Prentiss suhtautuu Toddiin poikanaan ja hakee tämän hyväksyntää, ja Todd vuorostaan antaa pormestari Prentissin opettaa itselleen Melun hallintaa ja siten etäännyttää Toddia Violasta ja muista läheisistään.

Benin ja pormestari Prentissin ero korostuu erityisesti heidän suhtautumisessaan Meluun. Pormestari Prentiss on oppinut vaientamaan Melunsa ja käyttämään sitä muiden hallitsemiseen tai vahingoittamiseen, ja välittää oppinsa myös Toddille. Opettamalla Toddia hyödyntämään Meluaan omien tunteidensa tukahduttamiseen ja muiden kontrolloimiseen, hän käytännössä opettaa Toddille toksista maskuliinisuutta. Benin Melu sen sijaan on alusta asti rauhallinen ja avoin, ja myöhemmin sarjassa, tultuaan Maan pelastamaksi ja parantamaksi, Ben oppii kommunikoimaan Melun avulla vielä entistä edistyneemmin. Ben edustaa siten täysin erilaista maskuliinisuutta kuin pormestari Prentiss; maskuliinisuutta joka perustuu avoimeen kommunikaatioon ja tunteiden ilmaisuun. Benin edustama maskuliinisuus on toksisen ja hegemonisen maskuliinisuuden vastakohta, joka perustuu hierarkkisten rakenteiden ja sorron sijaan tasa-arvoon, emotionaaliseen ja kulttuurilliseen avoimuuteen sekä väkivallattomuuteen. Tämä maskuliinisuuden malli on se, jonka Todd päätyy omaksumaan, ja joka antaa toivoa paremmasta tulevaisuudesta; yhteiskunnasta joka priorisoi välittämistä hegemonian sijaan.

Vaikka maskuliinisuuden ja sukupuolen teemoja on käsitelty nuorten dystopiakirjallisuudessa jo kauan, *Chaos Walkingin* suora ja avoimen kriittinen näkökulma toksiseen maskuliinisuuteen tekee siitä poikkeuksellisen genressään. Tutkielmassani esitän, että *Chaos Walking* osoittaa kuinka toksinen maskuliinisuus vaikuttaa haitallisesti poikien ja miesten identiteettiin ja hyvinvointiin, mutta demonstroi samalla kuinka muista välittäminen ja välitetyksi tuleminen voivat auttaa miehiä irrottautumaan toksisen maskuliinisuuden kontrollista. Todd onnistuu luopumaan pakkomielteestään yhteiskunnan asettamien maskuliinisuusvaatimusten täyttämisestä vain oppimalla priorisoimaan läheisistään välittämistä ja oppimalla antamaan heidän välittää ja pitää huolta itsestään.

Toddin tarina osoittaa, että muutos hegemoniassa on mahdollinen, mutta se vaatii olemassa olevien rakenteiden aktiivista kyseenalaistamista ja purkamista ja ennen kaikkea yhteistyötä. Yhteisöissä, joissa hegemoninen maskuliinisuus rakentuu toksisten periaatteiden ympärille, paradigman muuttaminen vaatii yhteiskunnan moraalisten periaatteiden radikaalia muutosta poispäin eriarvoisuudesta ja kontrollista ja kohti välittämistä. Tätä muutosta Todd ja *Chaos Walking* mielestäni edustavat – paitsi Uudessa Maailmassa, myös omassamme.