

ORDINARY MASCULINITIES IN JOHN CHEEVER'S
"THE ENORMOUS RADIO" AND "THE FOURTH ALARM"

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This MA-thesis focuses on the study of John Cheever's works "The Enormous Radio" (1947) and "The Fourth Alarm" (1970) using masculinity theory as the lens for the close analysis of the short stories. The study aims to highlight the issues of patriarchal society and its repercussions on men, drawing attention to the different roles a man has to play in order to uphold his position of hegemony in society, including the roles of a father, husband and the breadwinner.

The theoretical background for this work is based on Raewyn Connell and Michael Kimmel's as well as other gender studies theorists' works. Raewyn Connell's theories about the plurality of masculinities, hegemonic masculinity and the relations between genders are discussed thoroughly. Kimmel's research on American masculinities in the 20th century is used as a background for the analysis of the different struggles that men face in the context of 20th century USA.

The main outcomes of this thesis prove that the patriarchal society is harmful for both men and women. The two main characters discussed in the study represent different reactions to the same types of changes in society. Both reflect the difficulty of upholding a hegemonic position and performing the roles that are expected of them. These findings represent the changes that men are still going through in society and are therefore still important in today's discourse about gender and gender roles.

Keywords: hegemonic masculinity, gender roles, 20th century USA, John Cheever

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1 Introduction

The depiction of gender is a common source of interest for when studying literature. How different genders are portrayed in writing across centuries acts as a mirror for each time period. But which voices are encapsulated in these images and which ones are silenced? For a long time, I have been interested in feminist readings of literature, especially in the way women are depicted in heteronormative relationships within societies. The studies on the dynamics of marriage often highlight the struggles of women across centuries. However, as I began a close reading of the female characters in my source material, I realized that I had been silencing a voice in my own readings – that of the ordinary man who, similarly to the woman in a patriarchal society, is also faced with expectations and roles that he is supposed to fill. Naturally we read a lot about men in historical writing and in literature, but these texts tend to lean towards either the grandiose accomplishments of men or the horrifying feats that have occurred because of men. Peter Filene (1987, 105) discusses this bias from the perspective of historical writing:

Our male ancestors debated in legislatures, preached hellfire sermons in churches, harvested wheat under burning sun, and forged steel in factories. They also drank in saloons, watched or played baseball, earned Boy Scout Badges, and belonged to fraternities and Rotary Clubs: but historians have paid little attention to these recreational activities in the semi-public realm. And, of course, men also were boys, lovers, husbands, and fathers; but historians have given even less attention to these private roles.

As Filene suggests, the great and the terrible is documented but often what is in between, what is relevant regarding the majority of men, is ignored. The regular man with a middle-class life including a marriage, children and a decent job are left out of history books (Filene 1987, 105). Though Filene's criticism is directed towards writing history, a similar pattern can be seen in literary criticism as well. While feminist criticism has definitely come a long way in the recent century to fix this imbalance with regard to women, the history and the role of ordinary men still needs more attention. This is why I find it both important and intriguing to focus on the ordinary men in this thesis. My focus is still on the relationship roles and dynamics of a heteronormative marriage, but I want to study how the men feel in these relationships. To what extent do they make their own decisions as opposed to living according to set social boundaries?

The literary texts that I use as the basis for my investigation of the topic are John Cheever's two short stories "The Enormous Radio" (1947) and "The Fourth Alarm" (1970). In many ways they are similar: they deal with complicated heteronormative marriages within the 20th century USA. The relationships portrayed in these texts immediately draw attention to the strict molds that women are forced into, but they also provide a platform for analysis of what the respective men are going through. Through my readings of the short stories, the extent of gender-determined chains on men and women become ever more obvious. The themes prevalent in each story are gender roles, upholding an image, and the questioning of one's identity, and these are the main focus points in my analysis. For an adequate analysis, I will provide a theoretical framework for the basis of my ideas. The main masculinity theorists considered in this thesis are Raewyn Connell and Mikael Kimmel, though I will also touch on ideas from Arthur Brittan, Michael Kaufman and Joseph Pleck.

The research questions for my thesis are the following:

1. How are the male protagonists in "The Enormous Radio" and "The Fourth Alarm" represented in the short stories: what is said, what is implied and what is ignored regarding their gender, gender roles and masculinities?
2. How do the representations relate to the masculinity theories provided by Connell and Kimmel and other researchers?
3. Regarding the two stories and their male protagonists, what can we say about the position of the "ordinary" man in 20th century USA and the consequences that their gender role has on each male protagonist?

I will begin by introducing John Cheever and his short stories, as well as a few relevant previous studies of his stories. I will continue by defining some of the key concepts in the field and then introduce briefly the main theories that I use in the analysis. I chose to discuss Connell's theories for the sake of her vast research on the topic from multiple viewpoints. Kimmel, on the other hand, is one of the key masculinity theorists of the United States which is also the cultural context of Cheever's short stories. In order to answer my thesis questions, I will use these theories to provide a framework for my analysis of the two short stories through a contextualized close reading of each one. I will then conclude by drawing connections between the stories and discussing how these stories might reflect the situation of the ordinary 20th century American man.

2 On John Cheever and His Works

This chapter gives background information on John Cheever and his works. I will begin with a summary of Cheever's life, which provides context to the two stories that I am discussing in this thesis. I will then briefly introduce the works "The Enormous Radio" and "The Fourth Alarm". I will conclude with a presentation of a few relevant studies of Cheever's work that I will later expand on in the analysis.

2.1 John Cheever

John Cheever (1912–1982) was an American short-story writer and novelist who focused in his works largely on the American middle-class. He is one of the most famous short story writers and novelists of his time (Chilton 2015). Cheever's own family history is clearly visible in his writing. He writes about gender roles, marriages, and problems in relationships. His stories are filled with aspects that coincide with Cheever's own struggles including power structures in the family, infidelity and alcoholism. Because of these correspondences between his life and his stories, I find it relevant to introduce this likely source of inspiration for his writing.

Cheever was the second son of a shoe salesman, Frederic Lincoln Cheever, and the strong, energetic woman Mary Devereaux Liley Cheever (Donaldson 1988, 9–11). He inherited the enthusiasm for his writing from his mother (12). Mary Cheever was not a typical housewife but actually went to nursing school and became a head nurse, and later ended up supporting the whole family when John's father lost his job (31). She was not prone to show affection and his father was not home a lot as he was often on sales trips (16). His older brother Fred was 7 years older, due to which they did not have much in common as children (16). It was clear that his father favored Fred over him and felt as though one son was enough for him (19). John's father lost his job in the 1920's depression which ended up being very difficult for John, too (28). After his father became unemployed, he developed a drinking problem and his mother started a shop in their hometown in order to support the family. Though this should have been a source of pride, Cheever saw it as humiliating. He believed that in this way, his mother was

“unmanning” his father (31). The notion of manliness and masculinity is discussed throughout Cheever’s writing.

Cheever knew from a very young age that he wanted to be a writer – he told his parents so when he was eleven (18). His first stories were published in newspapers when he was only a little over 20-years old, and he ended up working together with *The New Yorker* for over thirty years of his career (61). In 1939, he met his wife Mary Winternitz, the daughter of two doctors (78). His decision to marry up the social ladder reflected his will to get back to the social position where his family was before his father failed in his job and became a drunk (84). The couple had three children and their marriage was seemingly fine (Chilton 2015), but the truth was that Cheever himself struggled with alcoholism, and the problem became increasingly severe in the 1960s. In addition to alcoholism, problems arose from John’s bisexuality and infidelity (2015). However, the couple stayed together till John’s death caused by cancer in June of 1982 (Donaldson 1988, 356). Cheever explores the topics of gender roles, struggles in marriage and alcoholism in his writing; therefore, we can conclude that his personal history has played a large role in his stories.

2.2 Introduction to “The Enormous Radio” and “The Fourth Alarm”

Out of the abundance of Cheever’s work, I chose two intriguing short stories that share similar themes and are written in a similar tone. Both are stories of heteronormative relationships and both are stories of how such a relationship, as well as the societal setting in suburban New York in the 20th century, takes a toll on the individuals in the relationship. Both stories question whether one should live according to the gender roles determined by society.

“The Enormous Radio” (henceforth ER) is a postmodernist short story first published in 1947. The story depicts a seemingly ordinary couple, Irene and Jim Westcott, living in their New York City suburban home with their three children. The story focuses on describing their everyday lives where Jim goes to work and Irene stays at home, and together they listen to the radio in the evenings. The story acquires touches of surrealism when Jim buys a new radio to replace the old, broken one. The radio starts to play conversations occurring in neighboring apartments, which at first intrigues both of them as they get a glimpse of the fights their neighboring couples are having. The fun does not last, as Irene becomes addicted to listening in on the conversations and

becomes increasingly agitated by them. In the end, Jim and Irene start questioning their own relationship and whether they are actually happy with each other.

The context of the story is the post-war New York City. The couple reflect the gender norms of the middle class of that time and place. While Irene is at home with the children, does not work and has to live on an allowance from Jim, Jim has to work long hours and barely has time to see his children. This results in problems in their relationship; both of them have lived according to these roles for a long time, but Jim begins to question the reasons for upholding such strict positions in the relationship.

“The Fourth Alarm” (1970, henceforth FA) was written a few decades later than ER, but the themes of the story are strikingly similar. The story is narrated from a middle-class man’s point of view. The story revolves around the narrator’s description of the changes going on in his wife’s life and how it is affecting him and their marriage. The narrator recalls how Bertha decided to quit her teaching job to become an actress in a nude play in New York City. The story focuses on the husband’s reflections before, during and after the episode of him going to see the play and having to participate in it. The unnamed narrator, i.e. Bertha’s husband, is hinted at having a drinking problem: “If you’ll excuse me, I’ll get another glass of gin” (FA n. pag.). It is implied that he has or has had an affair, which along with the way he speaks about his wife implies that he is not being very devoted towards her. While the story revolves around Bertha finding her calling in the nude play, it simultaneously focuses on how difficult it is for her husband to understand why she would make such a decision.

2.3 Relevant Studies of Cheever’s Stories

There are some relevant previous studies on masculinities and manhood in Cheever’s work that I will introduce in this section. I will briefly discuss Harriet Poppy Stilley’s analysis of “Bullet Park” and Nadja Hadjukovic’s analysis of both ER and FA. These will be important later in my own analysis of the story.

In her study, Stilley discusses masculinity in Cheever’s “Bullet Park” from 1969 (Stilley 2016). She examines how the male characters of the short story, Nailles and Hammer, depict “masculine dissatisfaction” in the 1960s suburban America. She explains that in the story, Cheever creates a setting of a seemingly perfect suburb; however, in this suburb there are set rules for people to follow. The characters Nailles and Hammer deal differently with the expectations the society has of them: “you can

either adjust and nail yourself to the inescapable set of narrow default options, or let yourself be hammered out of the system and perish – but there are no other alternatives” (2016, 40). The names of the characters allude to the stereotypical men’s job of a handyman, and ironically connect to the way each of the characters deal with the social requirements. Interestingly, the same two choices are considered, though not explicitly in these words, by the protagonists of FA and ER: Jim is on the verge of deciding whether to stay in an unhappy marriage but simultaneously upholding his position in society or to hammer himself out of this position with the threat of perishing in the eyes of society. Contrarily, Bertha’s husband is already “nailed” to his role so deeply that he does not even see the other option.

In her essay, Dunja Hadjukovic also discusses the theme of gender roles in reference to both ER and FA (1970). In her analysis, she explains the main difference between the two stories: ER is a story where the male protagonist is struggling with accepting his role but his wife is in denial of their marital problems; FA offers an opposing situation and depicts the complete confusion of a man who does not understand why his wife feels the need to go to such radical lengths as being naked on stage in front of people, while the wife herself has realized it is what makes her happy and free (Hadjukovic 2015, 15–17). This common theme in Cheever’s work is summarized best in FA by Bertha: “‘Oh, how wonderful and rich and strange life can be when you stop playing out the roles that your parents and their friends wrote out for you’” (FA n. pag.). This theme is considered throughout the analysis of both works. Next, I will move on to the theoretical background considering important terminology and theoretical frameworks within men’s studies and masculinity theory.

3 Men's Studies and Masculinity Theory

In this section I will discuss the importance, and the relationship between men's studies and masculinity theory. Men's Studies are quite a new approach in the field, as it has only been a component of sociology since the 1970's (Hobbs 2013, 383). According to Alex Hobbs, it has been relatively difficult to prove the importance of Men's Studies when we already have gender studies that includes the study of men as well. However, there is a rational reason for having a separate approach for the study of men. Hobbs explains that:

Rather than reinforce patriarchy (or bemoan its demise, as the men's right movement does), men's studies seeks to explode the myth that men in general benefit from it and celebrates a multiplicity of masculine identities over socially imbedded stereotypes (384).

This means that it is important to understand the diversity of men and masculine identities and to consider the fact that not necessarily all men benefit from patriarchy. Hobbs also argues that men's studies is not aimed at reinforcing or stopping the demise of patriarchy.

Harry Brod argues another point for the cause: the fact that men are represented in literature and in history so much also increases the extent of bias that appears within the masculinity studies' discourse (Brod 1987 2,3). He describes how the emphasis of discourse on men's careers and successes overrides the importance of their sphere of living, i.e. home and family as well as their personal lives. Brod argues that this is enough reason to have a separate discipline for men's studies (2,3). Michael Kimmel discusses the same idea: "we study men as historical actors – statesmen, soldiers, and the like [...] filling in occupational roles or acting as economic producers or consumers" (Kimmel 1987 279). This does not leave much space for discussing men as individuals; we need to discuss such issues as men's sexuality, intimacy and family, which are already a part of the feminist and gay scholars' research (279). For these reasons, it can be argued that the discipline is essential in its own right.

Men and masculinity are studied in many fields from sociology to literary studies. The relationship between these fields is similar to that of feminist literary criticism to feminist theory. Hobbs explains that men's studies has to do with sociology whereas masculinity studies concentrates on men and masculinities in literature (2013, 383). In

order to discuss the topic of male characters in literature, it is important to distinguish between some of the most important concepts concerning the field of men's studies and masculinity theory, and their interrelationship.

3.1 Terminology

In this section, I present some of the key terminology behind men's studies that are necessary for understanding my analysis of the two protagonists in Cheever's stories. These are often controversial and understood in many different ways, which is why I deem it necessary to give the appropriate definitions.

Gender is defined by the OED as:

The state of being male or female as expressed by social or cultural distinctions and differences, rather than biological ones; the collective attributes or traits associated with a particular sex or determined as a result of one's sex. Also: a (male or female) group characterized in this way. (OED, s.v. "gender")

It is important to note that this definition includes the notion of *characterization* of a group in either of the two ways, so the definition does not assume a biological binary. Gender studies' theorist Judith Butler argues that gender is in actuality "performative". She argues that gender is not a noun, but it is "doing" and not necessarily doing according to any pre-existing notion of the assumed gender (Butler 2019, 33). The same notion will be elaborated on in the context of masculinities later when I discuss Connell's work.

OED defines the term *sex* as:

Either of the two main categories (male and female) into which humans and many other living things are divided on the basis of their reproductive functions; (hence) the members of these categories viewed as a group; the males or females of a particular species, esp. the human race, considered collectively. Occasionally with plural verb. (OED, s.v. "sex").

Because gender and sex are so often confused with each other or used interchangeably, I will now note that I will be using the term "gender" in my analysis, but for the purposes of this theoretical section, I implement the terms that the researchers have used in their own studies. I will also note, that for the purposes of this study, I will only be discussing men and women and what is culturally considered to be feminine or masculine.

One of the key terms in gender studies is *gender order*. This refers to the way that gender is "ordered" across a society. Gender order exists in all societies – the order

is often in the form of patriarchy, but the term is not synonymous with patriarchy even though most, if not all societies form a hierarchical gender order (EMM, s.v. "Gender Order"). *Patriarchal Dividend*, on the other hand, refers to the notion that regardless of the position a man holds in society, most men are privileged by patriarchy, which is evident through men's dominance in corporations, politics, the army, and other public institutions, because they are perceived as having a natural ability to lead (EMM, s.v. "Patriarchal Dividend"). These concepts are central to the theme of relationships in the 20th century USA. Jim in ER and the narrator in FA depict masculinities that are not necessarily in the highest position out of all men, but they do benefit from their gender due to the patriarchal dividend and the gender order of the society.

3.2 Masculinity or Masculinities

In this section, I will discuss masculinities as a plural concept as opposed to a singular entity. My focus is on Raewyn Connell's research because she has studied the concepts of masculinities and especially *hegemonic masculinity* to a large extent. I will be referencing other researchers' ideas on these topics as well. I will also introduce Connell's most important ideas about gender and gender roles: The 4-fold-model of gender and the Western gender order.

Masculinity is a concept that might seem easy to define but has since the later 20th century proven to not be so. Horlacher summarizes the scholars' general consensus on the concept:

Most branches of masculinity studies agree that masculinity is best understood not as monolithic but as plural and changing over time. There is also a wide consensus that masculinity should not be considered as a given but as performativity, a task that has to be achieved, and a set of norms, differing according to regional, social and historical contexts, that society expects individuals to fulfil and to embody. (2018, 327–328)

To simplify, what is mostly agreed upon by men's studies scholars is that masculinities are plural and changing from one context to another, and they are not born with but built in time through performing certain norms that differ depending on the context.

Connell argues that masculinities do not concern only men, but they concern all human beings acting according to the "patterns of practice" related to masculinities. Connell discusses "gender as a structure of social practice" (Connell 1995, 72) and states that "when we speak of masculinity and femininity, we are naming configurations

of gender practice.” Essentially this means gender is largely a social construction as opposed to being based on biology. If we think of it this way, it is no wonder many men and women feel uncomfortable in fulfilling these roles the society defines for them based on their biological gender, since often these roles are bound to be against what a person actually feels as their own.

Arthur Brittan has also argued about masculinity being subject to change depending on its context: “since gender does not exist outside history and culture, this means that both masculinity and femininity are continuously subject to a process of reinterpretation” (1987, 3). Brittan defines three terms that are of importance when discussing masculinities: *masculinity*, *masculinism* and *patriarchy* (3). The first he defines as “aspects of men’s behavior that fluctuate over time.” By this, he refers to all the different trends that build masculinity in a given context. These might be hairstyles, styles or the reversal of roles in the home (3). Though these aspects change and develop over time, the discourse in the subject area point to qualities such as aggressiveness, assertiveness, independence and competitiveness, that are supposedly masculine behavior (4). This leads us to Brittan’s definition of *masculinism*, which he states is often confused with masculinity (4). Masculinism is the ideology justifying and naturalizing male domination, and hence leading to the ideology of patriarchy (4). The problem here is that masculinism assumes there is a fundamental difference between men and women, leading to the division of roles of men and women in society (4). These concepts are relevant to our study of FA, as these ideologies are certainly behind the misconceptions that are visible in the narrator’s thoughts in FA.

Connell is famous for her research of one of the field’s most important concepts: *hegemonic masculinity*. She explains that the concept derives from the “structural fact” that men dominate globally over women (1987, 183), i.e. from the gender order. Hegemonic masculinity also refers to the relationships among men where some masculinities are subordinate to others (183). Connell states that this “interplay between different forms of masculinity” is essential to the workings of patriarchal social order (183). Hegemony is domination that is enabled by institutions and their practices including religion, mass media and welfare policies (184). Connell further explains that hegemonic masculinity does not necessarily mean mistreating women, but it implies “the maintenance of practices that institutionalize men’s dominance over women” (185). The key feature of “contemporary” hegemonic masculinity is heterosexuality and being closely connected to the institution of marriage (186). This relates directly to Jim

and Irene's relationship. Jim's decision between leaving or staying in the marriage will be greatly affected by his innate need to meet the demands of hegemonic masculinity.

It is important to note that the concept of hegemonic masculinity has been further developed by Connell and Messerschmidt (2005, 843). They explain that the main aspects that still are considered true are the hierarchy and plurality of masculinities, i.e. the fact that masculinity presents itself in different ways and that to have hegemonic masculinity, we also have to have subordinate masculinities (843). However, they reject the "too simple model of the social relations surrounding hegemonic masculinities" (843) and "the notion of masculinity as an assemblage of traits" (844). The former refers to how hegemonic masculinity is constantly challenged in different situations, so it is not as simple as the earlier definition sounds. The latter criticizes the essentiality of the earlier definition of hegemonic masculinity. For the purposes of my analysis however, the earlier definition is adequate because, as Hobbs states, the fluidity of Connell's model might be a problem in sociology but in literary theory it can very well be implemented (2013, 387). This is why I have retained Connell's original definition for the concept.

Connell argues that it is essential to realize that even when we recognize several masculinities, we cannot oversimplify these into, for example "*a* black masculinity or *a* working-class masculinity" (1995, 76). She provides the framework of four different practices that create the Western gender order: hegemony, subordination, complicity and marginalization (77). By defining masculinity through these fluid concepts, we realize that "hegemonic masculinity" is not fixed as a specific type of masculinity, but it is only a type of masculinity that occupies the top position at a given space and time. This is something that can be questioned and that changes over time (76).

Hegemony, as previously discussed, refers to the group holding the power and "claim to authority" in relation to the other men and to women. A man's position might not be hegemonic in all fields of his life. He could hold the hegemonic position through a corporate job that is not yet affected much by the feminist movement, but in his personal life he might not be in such a position (77). *Subordination* refers to the gender relations within the hegemonic culture where groups of men hold different positions in relation to one another. A commonly subordinated group are homosexuals, but there are other groups as well, often described with offensive vocabulary such as "sissy" or "wimp". Such vocabulary is closely related to femininity, which emphasizes the position women are in in the hegemonic society (79). *Complicity* is a term that explains

the large number of men who do not completely practice “the hegemonic pattern” but still benefit from it through the patriarchal dividend. Connell argues that even if many men “respect their wives and mothers, are never violent towards women, do their accustomed share of the housework, bring home the family wage” can also convince themselves that “feminists must be bra-burning extremists” (95). The concept of *marginalization* refers to the relation between gender and other societal structures including class and race. These create further dynamics between masculinities. Some examples are the black sporting star depicting masculine toughness and the fantasy figure of the black rapist (80). Connell notes that it is important to realize that these relationships between men of different positions creates a framework where the configurations of gender practices occur in a changing manner (81). How this relates to the analysis of ER and FA is that, similarly, there are aspects in both Jim and Bertha’s husband that place them in a hegemonic position but, for example, Jim’s position at home is not in power and Bertha’s husband is likely an alcoholic, making the two men’s hegemonic position changing and relational to their context. Additionally, we need to consider that both men are white and part of the middle-class society, which orders them higher up than some of the marginalized groups of the otherwise similar context.

The way a society divides norms and institutionalized patterns based on gender is called the *sex/gender system* (EMM s.v. “Sex/Gender System”). Connell divides these dimensions into power, production, emotion and symbolism (2002, 62). Connell’s model initially concerned only power, production and cathexis (1995, 73). The first, *power relations*, refers to how “the main axis of power in the contemporary European/American gender order is the overall subordination of women and dominance of men” (74). Connell argues that this structure exists even if there are some exceptions such as households run by women (74). *Production relations* refer to how there are divisions of labor amongst men and women, such as corporations mainly being run by men and of course the discussion of the wage gap between men and women (74). Connell later has added that this division goes beyond the realm of paid work, since in the Western society it is also a division between paid work and the “work” at home where the former is “culturally defined as the men’s world” while the latter belongs to women (2002, 61). *Cathexis* is a Freudian term having to do with desire and emotional energy attached to an object (1995, 74). Connell later refers to this third relation as *Emotional Relations* (2002, 62). Often this is connected to the two first relations, but it does have its own place in the division. One can have either positive or negative

emotional commitments, for example prejudice against women or homosexuals. Of importance in this context is also an individual's sexuality (63). Connell has later added a fourth dimension to her model: *Symbolic* relations (65). She argues that society is a "world of meanings" and this also applies to genders (65). Symbolic relations can be analyzed through language, but also through the way people dress, wear makeup, use gestures and are depicted in photography and film (2002, 66). This symbolism shapes gender difference and also emphasizes the differences of what men and women are allowed to do (66). Connell's theory of gender systems will be useful in examining Jim's role and the type of masculinity he portrays as well as Bertha's husband and how he depicts different gender relations. Jim and Irene's relationship provides clear examples of the first three dimensions of power, production and cathexis, while Bertha's will to become an actress in a nude play is an excellent example of the fourth dimension.

3.3 Men's Roles

So far, I have discussed the different concepts behind masculinity and men's studies. Now I will discuss the different roles that men are expected to undertake in a given society. Since Cheever's works take place in the USA (specifically the state of New York) between the years 1940 and 1980, I will be looking closer at that context and what masculinity looked like in that time and place. Some of the key roles we will be discussing in this chapter are men in position of power, men as fathers, men as husbands and men as breadwinners.

As aforementioned in the context of the patriarchal dividend, generally, a white man is considered to hold a certain hegemonic position over other social groups. Michael Kaufman discusses men's relationship with power as follows:

There is, in the lives of men, a strange combination of power and powerlessness, privilege and pain. Men enjoy social power and many forms of privilege by virtue of being male. But the way we have set up that world of power causes immense pain, isolation, and alienation not only for women but also for men. (Kaufman 1994, 142)

Kaufman explains the fact that holding power does not equate with happiness. Moreover, he differentiates between the types of power that men have, and further highlights the hierarchy among different groups of men and masculinities. As an example, he explains that among the North American working-class men, it is important

to have physical ability, whereas their “upper-middle class counterparts” are required to have excellent verbal skills (1994, 145). In Cheever’s stories Jim and Bertha’s husband fall into the latter category of upper-middle class.

Men have generally been considered the breadwinners of the household throughout history. Brittan argues that the historical notion of men being the breadwinners and thus the “competitive” and the “conquering” gender still lives on in society through discourse in politics and other literature (1987, 77–79). As the man is historically supposed to be the breadwinner of the family, he has herewith also a certain privilege over the other members of the family. Brittan argues that this is often considered the case even if both man and woman work on their own behalf and bring home money, because this was originally the man’s job (113–114). This, then, leads to the household tasks being divided in favor of the man, i.e. taking care of the children and doing the dishes is mainly the woman’s job (1987, 114). The notion of the man being the breadwinner is an important theme in ER and it is continuously emphasized through the way Jim’s work and money is focused on throughout the story.

Pleck discusses how men’s role in domestic settings has changed throughout the years (1987, 88). He examines how the father’s role became decreasingly powerful throughout the 20th century. In the colonial times fathers were the “Moral Overseers” (84). This meant that the father was supposed to guide their sons to the right occupational path, and both sons and daughters toward a suitable marriage. Men were thought of as having “superior reason” whereas women were more affected by their emotions, which is why fathers were the ones who were supposed to guide the development of their children into the right direction (84–85). However, this has changed in the 20th century. The mother has become increasingly important in the upbringing of the children and the father has started to lose his power at home and through industrialization began spending more and more time as the breadwinner and less and less time at home with the children (87–88). Though this model already emerged in the 1920’s it has continued on throughout the 20th century as a strong model of American fatherhood (1987, 95). The role of an absent father is evident in both ER and FA through the way the relationship between a father and his children is barely discussed.

3.4 20th century White, American Man

In order to understand the characteristics and the behavior of Jim and the narrator of FA, it is important take a closer look at masculinities in their specific contexts – in the American suburban New York. Jim and Irene live in the city, whereas Bertha and her husband live on the outskirts of the city. Both are middle class white men who are married and employed (FA does not mention the husband's occupation, so this is merely an educated guess based on their living conditions) and have children. Both protagonists hold a hegemonic position in society, seeing as they are economically well-off, and they are white – race being another determining factor in hegemony. This section will discuss Kimmel's research of the plurality of masculinities and the changes men have faced in the USA through the 20th century.

Kimmel states: "Manhood is neither static nor timeless. Manhood is not the manifestation of an inner essence; it's socially constructed" (2006, 3). Not only is manhood a concept that differs across space, time and person, even in America the meaning of "being a man" changes according to class, race, sexuality and a number of other factors (3-4). This is why there is a need to talk about masculinities in plural. There are, according to Kimmel, two different histories of manhood that must be discussed in reference to American men: the constantly changing idea of the "ideal" masculinity (hegemonic masculinity) and the history of the manhood including the men that compete and coexist with hegemonic masculinity (4). The men in Cheever's stories represent the former, which is why this theoretical section is also mainly focused on the history of the changing ideal masculinity in the USA.

Kimmel claims that throughout history, it has been the main concern for the American man to not be seen as weak or "un-manly", and it has been less important for men to prove that they dominate women (4). Kimmel argues that the discussion of manhood in America is "largely a homosocial enactment" (5), meaning that it concerns more the relationships and the hierarchies *between men*. This is strongly related to Connell's idea of hegemonic masculinity in relation to other masculinities. Kimmel further explains that this does not mean that women are merely a causality of men proving themselves to each other – it means that they are not always central to proving one's manhood. However, femininity is undoubtedly a feature that is undesirable for a man aiming at being manly. Additionally, are often regarded as a "currency" that men use in attempt to prove themselves against other men (5).

Kimmel goes through the changes in American masculinities and manhood from the 18th century till today. He describes that the 1950s were stereotypically considered

a time of “quiet, order and security” (155). In actuality, these “simple days” were also an era of “anxiety and fear during which ideas of normality were enforced with a desperate passion” (155). He explains that after WW2, men tried to find the “normalcy” again in their lives to a point of desperation (155). The men of that time feared of “gender failure” because they knew that failure as a breadwinner and a father meant becoming “soft, spineless dupes of a foreign power who were incapable of standing up for themselves” (156). Because the concept of a “real man” was not clear to even most experts, they would instead describe the aspects of what is not masculine (156). This on-going confusion about expectations and ability to fulfill them is unsurprisingly harmful for a person’s identity and sense of self. This is an obvious theme in FA where the protagonist is afraid of losing his identity if he lets go of his “lendings” which for him, represent who he is.

A further issue Kimmel addresses are the changes in labor structure in the 1950s. Corporate capitalism was well underway at the time and replaced previous small businesses into large corporations where men were hired employees (158). What is more – these workplaces were not only a place for the white man. The men had to get used to women, who wanted work as well, since they had gotten used to working during the war. Additionally, the black men were also voicing their anguish “for full recognition of their manhood”, and seemingly everywhere the hegemonic man would meet gay men which caused additional confusion to them (158-159). These changes had all come about after the war and the white man was confused as to where he stood amidst all this. By the time of publication of FA, the position of women and men has advanced, but the main character’s confusion about the situation persists.

Kimmel further describes the confusion of the mid-20th-century:

As the 1950’s drew to a close, American men still felt temporary about themselves [...] Responsible breadwinners and devoted fathers, they were still anxious about overconformity but unable and unwilling to break free of domestic responsibilities to become rebels on the run. (169)

Kimmel concludes that the white American man of the 20th century felt discontented. They yearned for something, but they did not quite know what that was (169). This feeling was likely the result of not quite fulfilling the role of the man that they had been at the war, and also of feeling uncomfortable with all the changes happening in the society at the time. This discontent may also be connected to a notion Herbert Sussman discusses related to work ethic in America. He argues that there exists a paradox in the

USA where the working man is considered a manly man, but “the American men work so they don’t have to work” (Sussman 2012, 88). This means that the men were striving for “life at ease” (88) but also realizing that they would not necessarily ever reach the point where hard work would result in an easier life. Jim is a good example of a man who is a responsible worker who provides for his family, but he is not content and is not sure why.

In the 1960s and 1970s, a new era of masculinity began to arise. The demand to include minorities started to be permanent in social and political surroundings (Kimmel 2006, 174). This was not taken well by all of the middle-class white men. Kimmel explains that by 1970s men began to talk about “men’s liberation” – he describes that if they could not win against the oppressed groups of blacks, gays and women, perhaps they could join them (174). And the reality was, that they had the problem of having to be the breadwinner – it did not bring men joy or a sense of fulfillment but was more a cause of stress and conflict. Being in that role, men on all levels of society were in a rut that caused them alienation (175). Because men worked so hard and were expected to do so, the competitive atmosphere merely lead them to become lonely, isolated and empty (175).

Another important change in the 1960s and 1970s relates to women. The rise of feminism meant that women were now allowed in basically all the same public spheres as men. It meant they were allowed to request the same rights. Men saw this as a threat to their position and hence, their masculinity. At that time women’s sexual expression became more and more accepted. Women became empowered to stand up to sexual assault and harassment but also to claim autonomy towards sexual agency. They were now allowed to desire sex just as men were (175). Of course, this would also threaten men’s masculinity – if women were allowed to desire sex, it might mean that they are not always man enough to fulfil those desires (181). This is important in our analysis of Bertha’s actions in FA as she decides to perform nude on stage against her husband’s wishes. The rise of feminism inspired men, too, to question the restrictive roles the society placed upon them – this was a different type of oppression to what women or minorities were experiencing, but oppression nevertheless (185). Interestingly, we clearly see Jim going through such a process already in the post-war period. We also see the beginnings of this conflict in Bertha’s husband. He is experiencing the rise of feminism and the effects of it on him, but he does not yet understand how this must lead to changes in himself as well.

After discussing the main concepts behind masculinity studies, as well as men and men's roles in the society throughout 20th-century USA, I will move on to the actual analysis of Cheever's two short stories. This theoretical section has only included textual examples of what I have deemed necessary for the analysis. It is not a conclusive discussion of all the possible theories that could be relevant for the analysis of these short stories in scope of this thesis. However, I do believe that this provides a wide enough basis for understanding the conclusions I draw in respect to masculinities present in the short stories.

4 Analysis

Based on my reading of “The Enormous Radio” and “The Fourth Alarm” and on the theoretical background I have provided in the previous chapter, I have divided the analysis of the two short stories into sections concerning different aspects of the protagonists’ masculinities. They will be discussed separately, but at the end of my analysis, I will draw conclusions on similarities and differences between the two protagonists. Thus, the first sections concerning each work separately will aim at answering my first research questions: “How are the male protagonists of ER and FA represented in the short stories – what is said, what is implied and what is ignored regarding their gender, gender roles and masculinities?” and “How does this relate to the masculinity theories provided by Connell and Kimmel and other researchers?” while the last part will draw some conclusions aiming at answering the third research question: “Regarding the two works and their male protagonists, what can we say about the position of the ordinary man in 20th century USA and the effects of the position on each male character?”

4.1 The Enormous Radio

The narrator of ER is in third person and the story is largely told from Irene’s point of view, since she is the one experiencing all the events happening at home when Jim is constantly at work. What we know of Jim’s life is only through the events where he is at home, and of course, through how he is described by the narrator and by Irene. Therefore, my analysis of Jim will be based his actions and words, Irene’s actions and words, as well as on the third person narration describing Jim and his actions. In order to organize the analysis in a sensible way, I will first focus on the masculinities represented by Jim in their own sections: breadwinner, father and lover/husband. Then I will focus on the change in Jim during the story and hence the change of his masculinity. My analysis of Jim is strongly based on Connell’s model of gender (1995, 73), but also considers other theorists’ research about the different forms of masculinity. However, I will begin by analyzing the exposition of ER because I feel

that it is extremely revealing when discussing Jim and Irene's relationship and thus Jim's role as a husband and a lover.

4.1.1 Exposition of "The Enormous Radio"

The exposition of ER sets the tone of the story. The characters and setting are introduced in a way that immediately raises the question of what will become the couple's downfall. Gerlach introduces this idea of foreshadowing of conflict in the exposition.:

Because the story is set in a specific milieu, New York City, on the 'twelfth floor of an apartment near Sutton Place' and concerned with a couple whose lives 'strike that *satisfactory average* of income, endeavor, and respectability that is reached by the *statistical reports* in college alumni bulletins,' the ending will predictably involve a reversal, the discovery of what lies beyond the average. (1982, 147; emphasis added)

As Gerlach suggests, this description is a clear forewarning for the end of the story, because highlighting such ordinariness implies that beneath it, we will find the complete opposite. "Satisfactory" could be read as a positive adjective, but here it reflects all of what is not reached by the couple. "Statistical reports in college alumni bulletins" underline the importance of fitting into a certain, common statistic as opposed to finding actual happiness, i.e. the extent of the influence of society is apparent right from the beginning.

The theme of normality is further emphasized by how Jim is described: "You could not say that Jim Westcott looked younger than he was, but you could *at least* say of him that he *seemed to feel* younger" (ER n. pag.; emphasis added). The term "at least" stresses what is not achieved as opposed to celebrating what Jim does have or what kind of a person he is. The choice of the words "seemed to feel" is vague and reflects how Jim is the type of man who fits the societal requirements for his gender and thus does not draw any attention to himself.

4.1.2 Jim as a breadwinner in the 1950s USA

To better understand Jim's role as the breadwinner, I will discuss Irene and her role in the relationship as well; the characters contrast with each other which highlights the gender roles represented by each of them. As mentioned earlier, the main story revolves around Irene and her various chores and activities at

home. The actual action in the story focuses on Irene's reactions to the radio and her conversations about it later with Jim. This alone reflects how the story accentuates women's position as the home maker, while the man is absent and takes his place in the household only through the evenings to the following mornings.

As per the expectations for Jim as a man, he works long hours to provide for his family. How much Jim works becomes evident from constant mentions of him coming and going to work and from his demeanor when at home. Jim's departure and arrival are mentioned each time they happen in the story: "Jim came home at about six the next night" (ER n. pag.). Because this event is so often referred to, attention is drawn to how repetitive Jim's life is and how he fulfills his gender role on a daily basis. His occupation is not explicitly communicated but he does describe his job at the end of the story: "I had a very sobering talk with Mitchell today. No one is buying anything. We are spending all our time promoting new issues, and you know how long that takes" (ER n. pag.). From this we can concur that he is in the sales industry, but it is not treating him great at the moment. Furthermore, Jim states that "I haven't done as well as I'd hoped to do. And I don't suppose things will get any better" (ER n. pag.). He is obviously not satisfied with his career but has opted to live with it because of the expectations the society has of him to provide for his family. Even in the onset of the story Jim is hinted at being exhausted from working so much: "Jim was too tired to make even a pretense of sociability" (ER n. pag.). This suggests that he has previously lost his will to be sociable but at this point does not even pretend to be that way. Jim is a prime example of American men's struggle for the American Dream, which was nearly impossible to achieve (Sussman 2012, 88).

Jim and Irene fulfil the typical gender roles not only in the division of labor, but also at home, which can be analyzed in relation to Connell's "production relations" (1995, 73). As previously mentioned, Irene spends her time at home. As she shares her tasks with the maid, her responsibilities become even fewer. This naturally leads her into entertaining herself by listening in the neighbors. Jim, on the other hand, works long hours, and leaves the house in the morning together with the children. As the sole breadwinner of the family he gives Irene a monthly allowance so she can spend some money on what she needs. This is also typical of the time, as the men were back from the war and women took their places again as the heads of the household (Kimmel 2006,

155). This arrangement does not strike as a problem in most of the story, but it clearly becomes such later on.

These production relations of the genders are mirrored by the other couples living in the building. This is important because as minor characters, they act as reflections of Jim and Irene. For example, when Irene is leaving the house a little after twelve, there are “a number of women in the elevator when it stopped at her floor” (ER n. pag.). This highlights how it is only the women who are at home at that time of day. Additionally, the fights about money that Irene overhears, foreshadow the fight that the protagonists will end up having in the end.

In addition to the strict gender division of the protagonists into breadwinner and housewife, there are clear roles in the physical tasks performed at home. On many occasions, Jim completes a minor physical task, which Irene would surely be capable of doing herself, like switching the channel on the radio. The narrator explicitly mentions that “Neither of them understood the mechanics of radio – or any of the other appliances that surrounded them...” (ER n. pag.). Nonetheless Jim is the one who hits the radio when it does not work properly. Later on, when they have purchased the new, defective radio a similar incident happens: “when Jim Westcott came home that night, he went to the radio confidently and worked the controls” (ER n. pag.). He keeps reliving his role as the “repairer” of things, which is the role he has grown into. This is an example of how masculinities are constructed and not born with (Connell 1995, 72).

What is striking about Jim’s life is how he has no time for any personal development in the form of hobbies or friends of his own. The only occasions when he leaves the house aside from work is with Irene for the purpose of visiting some place together. Jim seems to have lost his identity – the grasp of who he is outside of being a husband and a breadwinner. This reflects the idea discussed earlier in the theory section from FA “Oh, how wonderful and rich and strange life can be when you stop playing out the roles that your parents and their friends wrote out for you” (FA n. pag.). Instead of having such a life, Jim is only playing out the role he is socially accustomed to, and this “pretending” is becoming more than he can handle.

4.1.3 Jim as a Lover and a Husband

As established in the first paragraph of ER, Jim and Irene are a very stereotypical couple of the post-war America. Through the description of their seemingly average ways of

being and doing, emphasis is drawn to the fact that they actually are only fulfilling the set gender roles of the time. This section will focus on Jim as a lover and a husband with reference to Connell's model of gender relations (1995 73).

Though it is clear that Jim is the stronger one when it comes to production relations, the roles are reversed when it comes to power relations at domestic level. It is unarguably Irene who rules in this household – this is also one of the exceptions to the power relations that Connell mentions, i.e. one of the few arenas where the woman is more likely in power (73). Irene does not hesitate giving Jim instructions and requests throughout the story: “Turn that thing off”, “Try something else”, “Go up to 16-C, Jim” (ER n. pag.). Similar power relations are not seen the other way around, as Jim is more focused on making sure he does what he can for Irene: “She seemed sad and vague, and he brought her a drink” (ER n. pag.). It seems as though Irene and Jim have learned to act out these patterns and neither one questions it.

Irene as the ruler of the household is emphasized by the amount of time she spends at home, which effectively makes the home more her space than Jim's. This is supported by how strongly she feels about the order in the home: “Irene was proud of her living room” (Cheever [1947] 1953 n. pag.). Not only is Irene clearly concerned with how the living room looks, but it is also referred to as “her” living room instead of “their” living room. This emphasizes how little power Jim has in the context of their home. However, it also emphasizes the very small circle around which Irene's life revolves and how little Irene has to be personally proud of. Furthermore, this attitude towards the home symbolizes her attitude towards her and Jim's marriage: the emphasis on looks is of utmost importance to her.

Jim is so used to their relationship that he has turned off a lot of his own emotions for the sake of Irene. When Irene is hysterical about the events happening on the floor above them, Jim merely states that she could “turn [the radio] off” (ER n. pag.). This reflects how the couple treats their problems – they simply turn off the switch and ignore any problems that are actually visible in their relationship. This creates an interesting contrast to how Jim treats Irene. While he brings her a drink when she is sad and buys her a new radio to replace the old one, he does not seem to have an emotional attachment to her. Instead, he is acting only according to the expectations to fulfil her material needs.

The lack of emotions brings us back to Connell's three-fold model and specifically to the third part which are the emotional relations. Though the emotions and attraction between the couple are not expressed at the forefront of the story, their problematic emotions are quite visible throughout the narrative. The first hint is that there is not much physical contact between them aside from them sleeping in the same bed. The only real physical contact that is described occurs at the end when Irene pursues to manipulate Jim during the fight at the end of the story. She flings her arms around him when she tries to make sure that he is not doubting her or their relationship, and the fight ends in Jim stroking her hair to comfort her (ER n. pag.). The lack of physical contact implies a pragmatic reason for being together – there might have been love between them before, but now it's just a mutual investment where they share a household and a family. The love between the two seems to be gone, but the relationship is still upheld either for mutual benefit or because they have not entertained the option of divorce. Jim likely considers that by holding on to his marriage, he ensures his position of a hegemonic man since heteronormative marriage is a way of upholding one's position in society (Connell 1987, 186).

The unhappiness of the marriage is also foreshadowed in the beginning of the story when Irene tries to figure out where to place the new radio, which she finds hideous: "She decided that tone was most important and that she could conceal the cabinet behind a sofa" (ER n. pag.). The radio symbolizes the state of their relationship: the notion that the way the relationship looks to the outside world, i.e. *tone*, is more important than what it actually is. They can conceal their problems within their walls and even pretend to each other that no problems actually exist. This, of course, will not be the case either with the radio or with their relationship. Both will cause major problems by the end of the story.

As discussed previously, the story reflects a clear difference in the amount of energy each of them invests into the relationship. On several occasions Jim pursues to make Irene happy. However, it is arguable whether this is out of love or merely out of habit or obligation. His motives become questionable when he gets angry at her for continuing to listen to the radio: "'I bought this damned radio to give you some pleasure' he said. 'I thought it might make you happy. I wanted to make you happy'" (ER n. pag.). It is not explicit, but the way he implies how much money the radio cost reflects how instead of buying it out of his own desire, he feels obligated to do so in order to keep his wife happy. Additionally, his emotional reaction to failing in making her happy is

more a reflection of him being disappointed in himself, because has failed in one of the roles expected of him.

The couple is only described having fun together one time. This happens after they have eavesdropped on their neighbors all evening: “They turned off the radio at midnight and went to bed, weak with laughter” (ER n. pag.). This reflects how relieved they are once they have heard of all the conflicts taking place in the other apartments where the couples think they have privacy. The truth about their neighbors make them relieved but at this stage, they do not understand why – it is because their neighbors are having the same problems as they are. This does not fix Jim and Irene’s problems but only makes it more justifiable for them to have such conflicts in their relationship without addressing them, since other couples are suffering from the same problems. The neighbors act as foils to the main characters because they are in similar situations, but they address the issues unlike Irene and Jim.

The climax of the story brings the reality of their relationship to light, at least to the reader, but it is not clear whether the couple realizes this themselves. Irene is fixed upon pretending that everything is alright, and Jim is so used to bending to her wishes that he does not question her. When Irene asks him whether they are happy or not, he assures her: “‘Of course we’re happy’, he said tiredly” (ER n. pag.). Him being tired at this stage is of massive importance. He is not only physically tired, but he is exhausted with fulfilling his role of being a husband, but at the same time he either does not realize it or does not want to admit it to Irene yet.

4.1.4 Jim as a Father

Jim and Irene have two children, but we learn little about them. They leave for school in the morning and they are put to bed by the maid in the evening. The maid in fact, plays an important role as the second caregiver of the family after Irene. Though it is common for the maid to take care of the children, Irene clearly plays a bigger role in parenting than Jim. She makes breakfast for them when the maid does not come out of her room, and at night she brings her son a glass of water (ER n. pag.). She completes the tasks that her role as a mother require her to complete, but because they can afford to have a maid, the tasks are in actuality quite minimal. Jim’s even smaller role as a parent is evident through the lack of mentions of him with the children or him mentioning them. He only talks about the children once when he is angrily describing

how much he's done for Irene and the children (ER n. pag.). This lack of connection is a result of the fact that his gender requires him to be away from home so much that he cannot simultaneously have a significant role in the upbringing of his children. This is an example of Pleck's description of the changing role of the American father (1987, 87-88).

The children are represented in the story only as a prop – they do not express personalities and the other child's name is not even mentioned. This reflects the lack of emotional attachment the parents have in the home towards each other and the children. There seems to be a complete lack of family identity, and the concept of family is for them merely a social construct. An important linguistic device used in the story is the pronoun used to refer to the children. On most occasions, the children are explicitly referred to as "her" children as opposed to "their" children. It emphasizes Jim's minimal role in having a personal relationship with his children whereas Irene takes the role of caring mother. This further reflects Connell's gender model and the differing power structures that are present at the domestic sphere (1995,74).

4.1.5 Changes in Jim's Masculinity

As the exposition of the story foreshadows, towards the end we see what is hidden underneath the image of normality represented by Jim and Irene: the bottled emotions and apprehensiveness of being forced into a mold they do not want to be in.

By the time of the climax, Jim has been blocking his true feelings for a long time and has not admitted to Irene or probably even to himself that he is not happy with his marriage. He has simply been trying to oblige by the rules set by the society on what he should be like and is trying not to show any weakness. This reflects Kimmel's description of men in America trying to fit into the role of the breadwinner and father and being afraid of failure (2006, 156). At this point Irene has yet again spent the day listening to all the horrible fights that the neighbors have had, and she has become doubtful of her and Jim's relationship as well. Irene confronts Jim about it, but she simultaneously practically begs him not to tell her the truth: "We're happy, aren't we darling?" (ER n. pag.). By flinging herself around him, she tries to appeal to him both physically and mentally. She also forms her question as one looking for confirmation to *her* desires instead of as a direct inquiry of *his* feelings. This works, and Jim fails to tell the truth and goes along with her: "'Of course we're happy,' he said tiredly" – thus

“surrendering his resentment” (ER n. pag.). Quite a significant part of the story comes after this fight when Jim is stroking her hair and comforting her and she asks: “‘You love me, don’t you’ she asked. ‘And we’re not hypocritical or worried about money or dishonest, are we?’” To which he replies “No, darling” (ER n. pag.). Irene says out loud all the different fears she has - whether they still love each other, whether they are hypocritical for laughing at their neighbors’ problems, whether they have money troubles like everyone else, but they have not addressed in their relationship, and lastly whether they are honest with each other. Even though it is said out loud, Jim’s answer is quick and short “no” which maintains the denial they are experiencing in the situation.

The conflict further unravels when Jim finds Irene’s bills unpaid: “He looked directly at her ‘why did you tell me you paid for them? Why did you lie to me?’” (ER n. pag.). Jim has come to a breaking point where he no longer wants to ignore such issues: “‘You’ve got to learn to handle the money I give you a little more intelligently, Irene’” (ER n. pag.). His real thoughts and feelings become clear. It is *his* money that he has generously *given* to her. He finally expresses all the resentments he has collected throughout the years. He confronts Irene about several immoral actions of her past, but additionally opens up about his own money troubles: “‘I’ve worked awfully hard to give you and the children a comfortable life,’” he said bitterly” (ER n. pag.). His resentment emphasizes how reluctant he is to be in this position. By admitting his resentments, he becomes weak in the eyes of the society. He fails to uphold the image of hegemonic masculinity. Kimmel also discusses the difficulty of upholding this position (2006, 4). The fact that he is even talking about his money issues hints that there has been a change in him. He wants to express how much work he has done and what he has lost in the process.

Hadjukovic discusses Jim’s feelings as follows:

At first Jim tries to comfort her, but then he gets sick and tired of playing the happy husband in a happy marriage, when actually they are two people with great problems, who obviously stay together out of convenience and obligation to their children. (2015, 17)

Hudjukovic adds: “Irene tried to lure Jim into her world of denial, but this time he did not give in. He confronted her, and by addressing the issue and dealing with his resentment, Jim made the first step towards solving their problem” (17). In Hadjukovic’s analysis, it seems that Jim is the one who realizes the actual state of the relationship and decides that it has gone too far. Hadjukovic further mentions that the

ending is left open and we do not know whether the couple ends up solving their problems or continue living the lie (17). However, through analysis of the last paragraph I would argue that they do not, in fact, solve their issues but continue living in a state of denial.

The voice on the radio was suave and noncommittal. “An early morning railroad disaster in Tokyo,” the loudspeaker said, “killed twenty-nine people. A fire in a Catholic hospital near Buffalo for the care of blind children was extinguished early this morning by nuns. The Temperature is forty-seven. The humidity is eighty-nine. (ER n. pag.)

The radio is fixed and works normally again – right after the couple has confronted the problems in their relationship. The news informs them about deaths all around the world and then the weather forecast comes on creating an ironic contrast between the terrible events and the nonchalance of the weather. The radio is a symbol for Irene and Jim’s relationship – similarly, they address the dark side of their relationship but fail to address the problem further, thus leading them to continue in the chains of the relationship.

This type of ending is typical to Cheever, as he does not, according to his own words believe in plot: “‘I don’t work with plots’, he claimed in an interview, ‘I work with intuition, apprehension, dreams, concepts’” (Gerlach 1982, 146). ER is constructed similarly. Though there is a plot in the sense that we do clearly move from one event to another in chronological order, most of the story is constructed by describing moments that revolve around the radio. The only clear reason to have the moments in chronological order is to emphasize the gradually worsening atmosphere in their home and the foreshadowing of the looming storm in their relationship. The moment of conflict, then, reflects the apprehensions of both Jim and Irene, but for different reasons. Irene is in denial, and Jim is too weak to express his will to get out of the gender mold he has been forced into.

4.2 The Fourth Alarm

Similar to “The Enormous Radio”, “The Fourth Alarm” is also a story that focuses mainly on the actions and the everyday life of the wife in a marriage. This lends itself useful for information on Bertha’s husband as well, but equally revealing are the inner

dialogue and actions of the narrator, i.e. the husband. I will hence focus on these aspects in my analysis of FA, with regard to Connell's gender model. I will often refer back to Kimmel as well, and briefly reference some of the other researchers mentioned in the theoretical section. My analysis focuses first on the first-person narrator of the story and the character's reliability and characteristics, then on his relationship with Bertha and their children, and I will end with an analysis of the theme of change in masculinity – a topic for which the story provides an abundance of symbolism that I will be analyzing.

4.2.1 The First-Person Narrator

FA revolves around the theme of marriage struggles from the point of view of the husband but with focus on the actions of the wife. The narrator of FA is a middle-class man married to Bertha and the father of two children called Peter and Louise. We never get his name, so I will be referring to him as “the narrator” or “the husband” in this analysis. The story is told from a first-person limited point of view, so all the information we receive about him and his family is through a biased, and likely unreliable lens. The narrator begins to tell his story sitting in the sun and drinking gin on a Sunday morning (FA n. pag.). Already the first sentence hints at a man who does not have his life in order as he resorts to drinking at such a time. He remarks not knowing where his children are, as they are with the housekeeper. This reflects his detachment from his family which compares well with how he feels towards his wife as well. We quickly find out that he has an affair: “Mrs. Uxbridge is sixty-three, my wife is away, and Mrs. Smithsonian [...] is seldom in the mood these days” (FA n. pag.). This is the first hint at his and Bertha's unhappy marriage, which is the main topic of the story.

The unreliability of the narrator is stressed through the structure of narration. The narrator describes some events in a nonlogical way. He skips from one point to another without clearly indicating to the reader that his focus has changed:

Her eyes, I think, are a little close together and she had a peevish way of disciplining them. ‘If you don't eat the nice breakfast Mummy has cooked for you before I count to three,’ she would say, ‘I will send you back to bed. One. Two. Three.’ (Cheever 1970, n. pag.).

He first describes Bertha's eyes but then as though he lost his train of thought, he starts describing how she disciplines their children. This emphasizes that he is either very distracted or he might be drunk because of having too many drinks that morning.

We do not receive much information about the narrator himself. He concentrates on describing how his wife goes to work and to theater and cares for the children. He does not mention whether he works himself or whether he has other hobbies than the occasional game of football with his neighbor. His focus on his wife's actions leads to the conclusion that he finds these more relevant to the problems of their marriage than his own actions. However, we can deduce that he has a job and that the couple are relatively well off. He is drinking on a Sunday morning, hence, not having to go to work anyway. They have a housekeeper whom they can afford even though Bertha quits her job. We can thus assume that he holds a position of a hegemonic masculinity in the society. But we can also draw the conclusion that he is not doing very well at the moment – this is likely the result of his wife's newly found freedom and the implications this has on him. I will discuss this further in this analysis.

4.2.2 Relationship with Bertha and the Children

In order to understand what type of masculinities Bertha's husband represents, it is important to look at his relationship both with his wife and with their children. We learn a lot about Bertha through her husband's eyes. We know that she became a social studies teacher at a high school. She is good at disciplining her students and also disciplines her own children in a methodological fashion. Her husband explains that she had joined the city's theater to get some variety in her life, but eventually she quits her job as a teacher to join the new nude performance called Ozamadines II. We learn that the pair has two children, and that nowadays the mother is only home from Sunday to Tuesday, when she goes back into the city to perform. All of these facts and how they are described by the narrator give us a glimpse into their strained relationship and how the narrator perceives his wife. We come to realize that he has great difficulty understanding her actions and how to react to them properly. Her absence from home and the newly found interests in a suggestive theater scene are evidence of a changing society for which the husband is evidently not quite ready.

As previously mentioned, it is quite clear from the beginning of the story that the narrator does not have a real interest or respect towards his wife, though this is not necessarily due to hostility but more due to ignorance. He holds idea about what a relationship should be like, and what each of their roles are in the relationship. He observes her doing things outside of what he deems appropriate, i.e. she quits her job as

a teacher and wants to “vary her life” by becoming an actress. He also observes her way of disciplining their children: she likes to use a counting to three – method to make the children obey. The husband observes all of this, but he does not quite understand her and her decisions. He also observes what she looks like: “Bertha is a good-looking young woman with a splendid figure. Her eyes, I think, are a little close together and she had a peevish way of disciplining them” (FA n. pag.). This reflects how analytical he is of her on the outside but how little he actually knows about what is going on in her mind.

The narrator’s ignorance shows through his beliefs about their relationship. He believes nostalgia to be a force keeping the two together:

Did she, mounted in public by a naked stranger, remember any of the places where we had made love – the rented houses close to the sea, where one heard in the sounds of a summer rain the prehistoric promised of love, peacefulness, and beauty? Should I stand up in the theater and shout for her to return, return in the name of love, humor, and serenity? (Cheever 1970 n. pag)

He goes on to describe how “nice” it has been to drive home after parties in the snow – an adjective not necessarily positive enough for Bertha to hold onto in an otherwise unhappy situation. He does not realize that the sense of nostalgia is not enough for Bertha anymore, even if it seems to be enough for him.

The narrator is aware of what the society deems as appropriate, and what a man is supposed to do and how he is supposed to act in a relationship. This is hinted at in the beginning of the story: “I enjoyed taking her to their parties” (FA n. pag.). The way he expresses this, with him as the one setting up the action, even though the parties are thrown by Bertha’s friends, implies how he believes it to be the husband’s job to take the wife places; he believes this is one of the things that keeps them both happy and content. A second example occurs when Bertha joins the nude production – as a solution, the husband thinks he should first tell her no, then he should hit her or ask for a divorce. These are clear indications of what he has learned from the society to be appropriate for a man to do in such a situation. However, he does not consider the fact that it might not actually be appropriate for him to tell her strictly no, but rather to discuss the decision with her as two adults. The second and third option are left only as thoughts but even as such, there is evidence that he does not consider him and Bertha as equals in their marriage.

Similar to ER, the husband’s relationship with his children is detached and quite passive. The children are only mentioned in accounts on how Bertha or the housekeeper

take care of them. The minimal connection Bertha's husband has to his children is stressed when he tries to use them in persuading Bertha to forget her dreams of joining the theater: "I mentioned the children and she said this experience would make her a better mother" (Cheever 1970, n. pag.). The way he describes this is so passive and nonchalant that it raises the question of whether he actually knows what would be best for the children. This disconnect to being a father reflects Pleck's description of the absent dad (1987, 87–88). Since his occupation is not mentioned, we cannot know for sure whether this is due to work or, perhaps to alcoholism, but the connection between him and his children is nevertheless weak.

In relation to Connell's model of gender relations we can examine especially the aspects of power relations and symbolic relations in Bertha and her husband's relationship (1995, 73). In their household, it is clear that Bertha's husband has slowly started to lose his power. He talks about how he should hit her or divorce her, but he does not do either. Violence is not in his character, and he cannot divorce her because she has not done anything condemnable. These thoughts merely represent his desperation in the change of his position. Bertha decides to do what she wants, and merely informs him of what she is doing without asking him whether it is a good idea. Even when he tells her not to join the theater, she completely ignores his request, because she knows it will make her happy. As for symbolic relations – Bertha's desire to join a nude performance depicts her acting against what is symbolically deemed feminine or appropriate for women.

4.2.3 Changes in Masculinity and the Society

FA is a typical story of the era where women begin to emancipate themselves from their gender roles and the men are not comfortable with it because they feel threatened by this change in power structures (Kimmel 2006, 175). The narrator represents the type of man who is fixed on his identity even though personal growth would help repair his relationship. It is continuously implied that he realizes something is wrong in his relationship, but he does not know how to fix it. He thinks that Bertha's actions are their main problem because she is being so radical, and he is clearly not content with the changes going on around him regarding her and her new social circle. The story is filled with symbolism and metaphors that support the narrator's lack of understanding of the

situation. The first is the name of the short story “The Fourth Alarm” and its implications, as well as the allusion to a film of the same name, the second is the allusion to *Ozymandias* through the name of the play, the third are the events that occur at the play and the symbolism of the theater itself.

First, I will analyze the name of the story: “The Fourth Alarm”. It has multiple meanings that carry the theme of change. As is explained in the story by the narrator, “The Fourth Alarm” is the name of a film that he enjoyed as a child – the film itself symbolizes the narrator’s values and thoughts. It is also a reference to the fourth count in Bertha’s rhyme of disciplining their children: “If you don’t eat the nice breakfast Mummy has cooked for you before I count three [...] I will send you back to bed. One. Two. Three” (FA n. pag.). This rhyme is repeated by Bertha throughout the day, and the husband observes this happening but does not realize it is a sign of Bertha being close to her limit. She will not continue such a life for much longer, but her husband is missing the upcoming “fourth alarm”.

The second way of understanding “The Fourth Alarm” is the movie which the narrator describes as his favorite when he was a child. In the movie, old horse-drawn fire engines are replaced by new, automobile ones. There is only one horse-drawn team left, when a fire breaks in the city. This is the fourth team, and they end up putting out the fire and being the heroes. The narrator describes going to see this same movie over and over again till its run ended. His obsession with the movie reflects both how much he appreciates bravery and boldness – typical masculine traits, as well as tradition and doing things “the old way”. His fear of change is evident from the description he gives of the movie. The narrator’s confusion about the changes going on around him are emphasized by how he reminisces the movie and simultaneously has to watch his wife’s play: “They [the fire fighters] put out the fire, saved the city, and were given amnesty by the Mayor. Now on the stage Ozamanides was writing something obscene on my wife’s buttocks” (FA n. pag.). The absurdity of the events is summarized in these two sentences: the way the society used to be is changing and now he finds himself having to watch his wife naked on stage being touched by other people. This scene symbolizes the changing society where women are being liberated and men are confused and feel threatened by this (Kimmel 2006, 175).

Looking closer at the name of the play Bertha takes part in, we see that the play itself is a metaphor for the changes in the society that the narrator is trying to understand and is having trouble accepting. The play is called “Ozamanides II” and what we learn

about it is that there is a king called Ozamanides, it is performed completely nude and there will be love piles and intercourse performances during the show. It is thus a highly radical and sexual play which alone is enough to awake apprehension in Bertha's husband. "Ozamanides" is also an allusion to the poem "Ozymandias" by P. B. Shelley. The poem essentially describes the fall of a long reigning tradition (Shelley, 1977). This relates directly to the narrator of FA, because not only is he witnessing the downfall of his relationship without being able to control it, he is also witnessing the changing society where the patriarchy that has always been present is being questioned and fought against by women and men who want equality. Additionally, the play emphasizes the acceptance of all sexualities which was a "new" aspect of society at that time (Kimmel 2006, 175).

The same theme of change is further emphasized by how the theater is described:

It was snowing that night I went to the theatre, or what had been a theatre. The proscenium arch had been demolished, the set was a collection of used tires, and *the only familiar features were the seats and the aisles*. Theatre audiences have always confused me. I suppose this is because you find an incomprehensible variety of types thrust into what was an *essentially domestic and terribly ornate interior*. (FA n.pag; emphasis added)

The narrator sees the theater where the only familiarity to what he has previously known are the seats and the aisles, but everything else has been changed. He does not even see it as a theater anymore. Additionally, he does not quite understand how the theater that has been "essentially domestic and terribly ornate" can be visited by such a wide array of people. This likely refers to all the different genders, sexualities and appearances that have not before been allowed to be expressed. His description of the theater is a metaphor for the society, and his confusion related to the theater is directly comparable to his feelings about the changes around him in the bigger picture. He is experiencing the type of confusion discussed by Kimmel, where straight white men started seeing gay people everywhere and were afraid and confused by it (2006, 158–159).

This theme continues as the theater performance begins, and the narrator is not sure he can describe it:

The sex was general. Men and women embraced one another and Ozamanides embraced several men. At one point a stranger, sitting in the seat on my right, put his hand on my knee. I didn't want to reproach him for *a human condition*, nor did I want to encourage him. (FA n. pag; emphasis added)

The narrator is observing sexuality outside of what he is used to. He is not judgmental but is trying to react in the best way possible. The narrator sees the act of putting a hand on his knee as homosexual. However, he does not want to act judgmental because he sees it is “a human condition”. He is therefore aware of the existence of different sexualities and even tries to respect it. He is clearly giving a full effort to be in a situation of discomfort where things are new and different to what he is used to.

Though the narrator is uncomfortable and uninformed as to how he should react in this situation, both at the theater but also within his own life, he is trying to understand his wife and his new surroundings. When the theater group asks audience members to remove their clothes and join them, the narrator complies: “This seemed to be my duty. How else could I approach understanding Bertha?” (FA n. pag.). He has the idea that he should try to understand his wife, so he must act accordingly. He believes this will help them fix their problems. He pursues to complete his role as a husband, but it conflicts with his own beliefs of what is appropriate. This reflects how unclear the requirements for “a real man” actually were at the time. As Kimmel explains, the inability of fitting into this role that was so unclearly defined caused men to feel as though they were failing (2006,185).

If the only purpose for stripping your clothes were to show boldness, Bertha’s husband would have likely succeeded in the task at hand. However, it is not enough for him to strip down. The actors are requiring him to leave his possessions at his seat as well: “Put down your lendings. Lendings are impure” (FA n. pag.). The narrator is unable to complete this command because he feels it is a threat to his identity – his existence as a hegemonic male who is in charge of his life and in control of his wife: “None of it was irreplaceable, but to cast it off would seem to threaten my essence, the shadow of myself that I could see on the floor, my name” (FA n. pag.). He defines himself so strongly through his accomplishments, possessions and his position that the thought of being without his lendings terrifies him. So, he decides to get dressed and leave – outside he realizes that it is snowing and that he has changed his car’s snow tires in time, and he feels such a sense of accomplishment about it that he thinks it “would have disgusted Ozamanides and his naked court.” He realizes that his own sense of identity and upholding a distinct image is more important to him than changing for his wife. The notion of him “jingling the car keys” merrily emphasizes that he is not regretful of this decision. He would rather hold on to his hegemonic masculinity than remove that layer in order to get closer to Bertha.

4.3 Effects of the Patriarchal Society on Men

We can now compare the two men of Cheever's stories in order to conclude how the existing patriarchal gender order affects ordinary men in a hegemonic position. In these stories, we see two couples who share a similar problem of dissatisfaction in their relationships. Both men are struggling, but they are struggling for different reasons. While Bertha's husband is finding it difficult to understand the changes in his wife's actions, Jim is struggling to uphold his role as both husband and breadwinner when he realizes he does not want to do so. Bertha and Irene also contrast with each other since Bertha is dissatisfied with the gender role she is supposed to play, while Irene does not accept that her relationship with Jim and their roles in it are problematic. In a sense, Bertha and Jim are in similar situations and Irene and Bertha's husband are similarly in denial. Nevertheless, we witness a man in crisis in both works. On Jim's part it is a result of trying to live up to the high expectations placed upon him as a man. In the case of Bertha's husband, he is in crisis due to the changes happening around him and due to his unwillingness and/or inability to understand them or accept them. We can conclude that a patriarchal society is not purely beneficial for men either because of the high expectations placed upon men that are under constant change.

As discussed earlier in the theoretical section, Connell argues that "hegemonic masculinity" which is portrayed by both main characters, is closely connected to the institution of marriage and to heterosexuality (1987, 186). This means that it is essential for men to retain a visibly successful, heterosexual marriage. This forces men into a dead end because even if they are heterosexual, being forced to stay in an unsuccessful marriage will likely cause problems with their mental health. This is clearly seen in Jim's struggles between leaving or staying. Eijun Senaha explains that in 20th century literature, the man is "powerless, lost and insane as their identities are lost" (2006, 99). This is due to the changes brought about by the end of the war and the rise of capitalist materialism (99). This powerlessness can be felt when Jim breaks in the end of ER and cannot think of other ways of fixing things than yelling. The loss of identity is evident in FA because that is exactly what the main character fears when he is asked to leave his valuables and identification at his seat. Senaha further explains that especially later in American literature of the 20th century, it became more common for men to begin recognizing that they are also *human* and not only *men* (100). Similarly, Jim is on his

way to realize that he is not necessarily supposed to be primarily a man, but he should be primarily human. This is not the case for Bertha's husband who is so fixed on believing in the preservation of differing roles for men and women.

In the end, we can conclude that both men are affected by the performing of their gender roles that the patriarchal society's expectations inflict upon them. The difference is how they are affected by it. Jim experiences first-hand problems of not being able to live up to the expectations. He is extremely unhappy in his relationship and only sees the societal obligation of staying in the relationship. In the context of this story, around the 1940's and 1950's, Jim is one of many who is in the same situation, as the prospect of divorce was not widely considered in face of marital problems. Their neighbors are trapped in the same situation. Bertha's husband, on the other hand, experiences the gender role strains second-hand. As the 1970s allowed for more freedom for women, Bertha is empowered to break the gender roles inflicted upon her. This leaves her husband in the dilemma where he is trying to uphold the role that, for him, makes a "real man" but is unable to do so since his wife is no longer complying. He does not realize the extent to which the society is changing and thus ignores his own role in changing in order to rescue his marriage.

5 Conclusion

The aim of this thesis has been to discuss the ordinary masculinities in 20th century USA in relation to two famous short stories by John Cheever. I have focused specifically on the men and masculinities in the two stories “The Enormous Radio” (1948) and “The Fourth Alarm” (1970). My theoretical background for the sociological field of men’s studies is in Raewyn Connell’s gender theories and Michael Kimmel’s study of the American manhood. I have used these theories to discuss the characters of Bertha’s husband and Jim, the contexts of their stories, their relationships and most importantly the struggles they face within the patriarchal American society of the 20th century. My conclusions are that while both stories are tragic tales of unhappy marriages, both male characters experience their unhappiness for different reasons. Thus, we can also conclude that the patriarchal society does inflict problems on men, too, but the issues differ largely from those that patriarchy inflicts upon women.

“The Enormous Radio” paints a deceptive image of a happy relationship between a man (Jim) and a woman (Irene) abiding by the rules of gender order and gender norms of the American middle-class society. As a result, the story reveals the harm that this role in the relationship inflicts upon Jim. This furthermore results in the shattering of the image of hegemonic masculinity that Jim up until that point has manifested. On a broader note, the short story acts as a mirror to the actual fates of the ordinary white men of post-war America and helps us understand the extent of harm that construction of gender norms causes on both genders.

“The Fourth Alarm” is a similarly constructed story of an unhappy marriage told from the unreliable point of view of the husband. We learn that his wife Bertha is unhappy with where she is in life and has found a way to be her true self through means that are not in line with the expectations for her gender. This results in a conflict within her husband and also between the couple. The end result is the inability of the husband to understand what his wife is going through, as well as the unwillingness or inability to let go of the role of the hegemonic man that he has grown accustomed to play.

It is important to note that addressing the struggles of the male gender in the patriarchal society does not take away from the struggles of women. Another valid approach to analyzing ER would be a take on how Irene is forced to stay in their small apartment. The radio’s magical power to listen in on their neighbors together with the small space where Irene is stuck create a gothic atmosphere that could be analyzed

further. A feminist approach to FA would allow more focus on Bertha and how she empowers herself to tackle a difficult situation, simultaneously breaking some of the gender barriers of the time. Clearly, there are at least two sides to both of these stories. Not only is the patriarchal society oppressing women, but it sets men up for failure because they cannot uphold their expected role within it, and they feel a sense of confusion and thus end up in an identity crisis when this setup is rebelled against.

I would like to end with noting that this thesis is an analysis of stories set in the 20th century. Even the earlier one was published over half a century ago. Though the inability of men and women to fit society's norms of gender roles is still a subject of discussion, the world has come a long way since. It is now recognized that gender roles are fundamentally socially constructed, and the need to fit them is not as essential as it has been before.

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Appendix

Tiivistelmä

Tämä pro-gradu tutkielma käsittelee maskuliinisuutta yhdysvaltalaisen kirjailijan, John Cheeverin kahdessa novellissa: *The Enormous Radio* (1947) (suomeksi Mahdoton radio) ja *The Fourth Alarm* (1970). Tutkielmassa käsitellään erityisesti näiden kahden novellin päähenkilöiden rooleja parisuhteissaan sekä sukupuoliroolien ylläpitämistä, ja siitä johtuvaa painetta, jota päähenkilöt kokevat. Tutkielmassa esitellään muun muassa sukupuoliroolien teoriaa, ja keskitytään erityisesti Michael Kimmelin teoriaan 1900-luvun Yhdysvaltalaisen miesten muuttuviin sukupuolirooleihin silloisessa yhteiskunnassa.

Tutkielmani on ajankohtainen nykypäivän vilkkaassa keskustelussa sukupuolirooleista ja niiden aiheuttamista paineista kaikille sukupuolille. Historiallisesti miehet ovat esiintyneet paljon diskurssissa niin historian kirjoissa kuin myös kirjallisuuden tutkimuksessa, mutta niin sanottu ”tavallinen” mies on jäänyt vähemmälle huomiolle. Tällainen mies on mahdollisesti naimisissa ja käy töissä, mutta ei ole tehnyt mitään urotekoja. Heille on asetettu yhteiskunnan struktuurin vuoksi paineita siitä, millä tavalla heidän kuuluisi elää ja minkälaisiin rooleihin heidän tulisi mahtua. Tämän vuoksi koen, että tutkimukseni näihin ”tavallisiin” miehiin kohdistuvista paineista ja siitä aiheutuvasta ahdistuksesta on tärkeää. Olen valinnut Cheeveriltä kaksi novellia sen perusteella, että hän käsittelee näissä miesten kokemuksia muuttuvassa yhteiskunnassa kahtena eri aikakautena ja eri näkökulmista. Molemmissa novelleissa miehet kokevat ahdistusta liittyen sukupuolirooleihinsa, mutta ahdistuksen syy on erilainen molemmilla miehillä.

Olen jakanut tutkimuskysymykseni kolmeen pääkysymykseen, jotka ovat seuraavat:

1. Miten Cheeverin miespäähenkilöitä kuvataan novelleissa liittyen heidän sukupuoleensa, sukupuolirooleihinsa ja maskuliinisuuteensa? Mitä kerrotaan, mitä jätetään kertomatta ja mitä voimme päätellä näistä?
2. Miten nämä kuvaukset liittyvät Kimmellin, Connellin ja muiden tutkijoiden teorioihin maskuliinisuudesta?
3. Näiden päähenkilöiden kuvauksien perusteella, mitä voimme päätellä 1900-luvun amerikkalaisen miehen asemasta yhteiskunnassa ja ongelmista, joita heidän sukupuoliroolinsa asettamat paineet aiheuttavat?

Tutkimuksessani vastaan näihin esittelemällä ensin Cheeverin taustaa, esittelemällä hänen novellinsa ja niistä tehtyjä tutkimuksia, teoriaa niin maskuliinisuudesta yleisesti, kuin spesifisti Yhdysvaltoihin liittyen, sekä tekemällä teoriapohjaisen analyysin molemmista novelleista ja pohtimalla lopuksi miten novellit liittyvät myös toisiinsa.

John Cheever on elänyt itse 1900-luvun New Yorkissa, minkä vuoksi monet hänen teoksensa ovat saaneet vaikutteita hänen omasta elämästään. Cheeverin omaan taustaan liittyy muun muassa ongelmallisia käsityksiä sukupuolirooleista, alkoholismia, pettämistä ja työttömyyttä. Samankaltaisia аспектеjä löytyy hänen teoksistaan, joten on oletettavaa, että hän on tarkoituksella liittänyt piirteitä omasta elämästään novelleihinsa. Cheever syntyi perheeseen, jossa isä teki paljon töitä, mutta lopulta menetti kuitenkin työpaikkansa ja sairastui alkoholismiin. Tämän vuoksi perheen äiti alkoi huolehtia perheestä tekemällä itse töitä. Tämä suututti Cheeveriä, sillä hän koki, että hänen äitinsä aiheutti haittaa isänsä maskuliinisuudelle. Cheever meni myöhemmin itse naimisiin melko yläluokkaisen naisen kanssa, ja päätyi itsekkin sairastumaan alkoholismiin. Suhteessa oli lisäksi uskottomuutta, joten Cheeverin novelleissa näkyvä kritiikki parisuhteita kohtaan saattaa hyvin pohjautua myös hänen omaan taustaansa.

Valitsemani Cheeverin teokset keskittyvät molemmat New Yorkissa elävien keskiluokkaisten pariskuntien elämään. Molemmissa novelleissa esiintyy päähenkilöinä heteronormatiivinen pariskunta, joilla on melko perinteiset roolijaot. Molemmissa kuitenkin pariskunta kohtaa vaikeuksia, kun heistä toinen huomaa, ettei pysty toteuttamaan itseään yhteiskunnan hänen sukupuolelleen asettamien rajojen puitteissa. Ensimmäinen novelli *Mahdoton Radio* keskittyy kuvaamaan New Yorkin kaupungissa asuvien Jim- ja Irene Westcottien elämää. He toteuttavat stereotyyppisiä sukupuoliroolejaan jakamalla työnsä niin, että Jim käy töissä pitkää päivää ja Irene huolehtii heidän kodistaan ja lapsistaan. Heille tuottaa ongelmia heidän elämäänsä ilmestyvä radio, joka alkaa yllättäen lähettää radiokanavien sijasta heidän naapureidensa käymiä intiimejä keskusteluja. Pariskunta kuuntelee näitä ensin jopa huvittuneina, mutta lopulta keskustelut ja siitä aiheutuva paine johtaa Irenen ja Jimin tilanteeseen, jossa Jim alkaa kyseenalaistaa heidän suhdettaan ja samalla siinä olevia sukupuolirooleja. The Fourth Alarm kertoo myös New Yorkissa asuvasta pariskunnasta, mutta novelli on kirjoitettu vasta 1970-luvulla, joten siinä esiintyvät tapahtumat heijastavat kyseistä aikakautta. Bertha ja hänen miehensä kamppailevat novellin alusta asti suhteensa kanssa. Bertha on kyllästynyt rooliinsa tiukkana äitinä ja opettajana, joten hän päättää lopettaa työnsä ja liittyä teatteriin ja siellä produktioon,

jossa hän esiintyy alasti. Tämä aiheuttaa kriisin hänen miehelleen, ensiksi sen takia, että Bertha ylipäättään haluaa tehdä jotakin näin radikaalia, ja toisekseen koska Bertha ei edes pyydä mieheltään tähän lupaa. Miehellä on vahva usko siitä, millä tavalla miesten ja naisten kuuluisi toimia, ja hän ei pyrkimyksistään huolimatta saa muutettua tätä käsitystään näistä sukupuolirooleista.

Teoriapohjana olen käyttänyt pitkälti Raewyn Connellin teoriaa neljästä eri maskuliinisuudesta (hegemoninen-, myötämielinen-, alistettu- ja marginaalinen maskuliinisuus) ja sukupuolten välisten suhteiden rakentumisesta yhteiskunnassa (valtasuhteet, työnjako, tunne-elämä ja symbolismi). Määrittelenkin Connellin teorian perusteella Cheeverin päähahmot hegemonisen maskuliinisuuden edustajiksi, ja totean, että he pyrkivät ylläpitämään tätä positiota yhteiskunnassa kokien kuitenkin sen vaikeaksi. Sukupuolten välisten suhteiden teoria on oleellinen molempia päähenkilöitä tarkasteltaessa, mutta pohdin erityisesti Jimin ja Irenen välistä suhdetta näiden perusteella analysoidessani novellia *Mahtava Radio*.

Michael Kimmel kuvaa erityisesti yhdysvaltalaisen miesten asemaa 1900-luvulla. Teoriaosuudessa esittelen hänen teoriaansa siitä, miten kyseisen aikakauden historialliset tapahtumat liittyen, lamaan ja sotiin vaikuttivat miesten asemaan. Muutoksia miesten asemaan aiheuttivat myös naisten aseman paraneminen ja homoseksuaalisten aseman muutos yhteiskunnassa. Naiset ja minoriteetit saivatkin yhtäkkiä käydä töissä, ja naisten seksuaalisuudesta tuli vapaampaa. Miesten sukupuoliroolit ja niihin liittyvät vaatimukset muuttuivat suuresti: perinteiset roolit leiväntuojana, isänä ja perheen johtohahmona, mutta myös aviomiehenä ja rakastajana muuttivat muotoaan aiheuttaen miehille hämmennystä. Ympäriä tuli median välityksellä erilaisia määritelmiä sille, minkälaisia heidän ei ainakaan tulisi olla, mutta selvyyttä ei ollut siitä, minkälaisia miesten sitten kaikkien muutosten jälkeen tulisi olla. Tämän takia mies ei enää tiennyt kunnolla mikä hänen asemansa yhteiskunnassa oli.

Tutkielmani analyysiosion olen jakanut kolmeen osaan, joista ensimmäinen keskittyy Mahtavaan Radioon, toinen *The Fourth Alarm*:iin ja kolmas siihen, miten nämä novellit linkittyvät toisiinsa sukupuoliroolien ja niiden aiheuttamien paineiden pohjalta. Täten vastaankin analyysissäni ensin kahteen ensimmäiseen tutkimuskysymykseeni, ja kolmanteen vastaan kolmannessa osiossa, jossa käsitelen yleisemmällä tasolla maskuliinisuuden ja miesten roolien ylläpitämisen seurauksia. Ensimmäisessä analyysiosiossa totean, että Jimin ja Irenen suhdetta voi hyvin tutkia Connellin sukupuolten välisten suhteiden teorian perusteella. Analysoin ensin Irenen ja

Jimin välistä suhdetta työnjaon perusteella. Sen lisäksi, että Irene kuvataan viettävän poikkeuksetta aikansa kotona kuunnellen radiota ja paikoitellen käyvän ystäviensä kanssa lounaalla, Jimin elämä koostuu novellin perusteella pitkistä työpäivistä, jotka tuntuvat toistuvan yksitoikkoisesti. Jim on siis perheen ainoa leiväntuoja, joten hän kärsii paineesta elättää koko perhe. Rahahuolet osoittautuvatkin yhdeksi pääsyyksi pariskunnan väliselle riidalle novellin lopussa. Työnjakoa voi myös tarkastella kotona tapahtuvien askareiden muodossa. Jim hoitaa kotona pienet korjaustyöt, kun taas Irene huolehtii lapsista yhdessä lastenhoitajan kanssa. Tässä esiintyy selkeä esimerkki siitä, kuinka pariskunta elää rooliensa vankina, koska Jim ei novellin mukaan edes osaa hoitaa näitä tehtäviä sen paremmin kuin Irene.

Seuraavaksi pohdin Jimin ja Irenen välistä valtasuhdetta. Jim edustaa yhteiskunnan tasolla hegemonista maskuliinisuutta, mutta kotona hän tuntuu palvelevan Ireneä, joka ohjaa siellä tekemistä. Hän esimerkiksi käskyttää Jimiä tekemään hänelle pieniä palveluksia ja Jim tottelee häntä. Emotionaalinen suhde esiintyy melko kylmänä pariskunnan välillä, sillä Irene ja Jim eivät juurikaan koske toisiaan tai puhu toisilleen kauniisti. Tätä tapahtuu vain niissä kohdin, kun Irene on ahdistunut ja haluaa varmistaa, että heidän välillään onkin kaikki hyvin. Osion lopussa pohdin myös tarkasti Jimissä tapahtuvaa muutosta, ja totean, että muutos hänessä johtuu siitä, että hän ei pysty ylläpitämään roolejaan suhteessa enää.

Analyysin toisessa osiossa pohdin Berthan ja tämän miehen suhdetta Connellin teorian mukaan, mutta analysoin myös, miten Berthan mies edustaa Kimmelin mainitsemää miesryhmää, joka eivät 1900-luvulla ymmärtänyt naisten aseman paranemista ja sitä, mitä se tarkoittaisi heille. Selitän tässä osiossa myös, miten Berthan mies näyttäytyy epäluotettavana kertojana, sillä hän kuvailee Berthan ja hänen suhdettaan oletettavasti humalassa.

Tähän novelliin liittyen ovat oleellisia Connellin sukupuolisten välisten suhteiden teoriasta erityisesti valtasuhteet ja symbolinen suhde. Berthan ja hänen miehensä välisessä suhteessa Bertha on se, joka on enemmän vallassa. Hän tekee päätöksiä oman hyvinvointinsa pohjalta koittaen välttää sukupuoleensa liittyviä vaatimuksia. Sen sijaan Berthan mies ahdistuu tästä ja kokee olevansa alakynnessä, koittaen myöskin taistella tätä vastaan pohtien vaihtoehtoja erota tai lyödä vaimoaan. Berthan päätös liittyä teatteriin, jossa esiinnyttään alasti, on esimerkki symboliikasta, jossa jotkin asiat mielletään vain toiselle sukupuolelle sopivaksi. Berthan päätös symboloi 1970-luvun yhteiskuntaa, jossa hiljalleen naisten asema alkoi parantua, ja

naiset alkoivat näyttää seksuaalisuuttaan avoimemmin. Tämä aiheuttaa Berthan miehessä hämmennystä sillä hän ei osaa käsitellä sellaista muutosta etenkin, kun se tapahtuu niin lähellä häntä.

Novellissa esiintyy paljon symboliikkaa liittyen muutoksiin sukupuolirooleissa ja vastahakoisuutta hyväksyä tätä. Pohdin tässä osiossa muun muassa novellin nimen montaa eri merkitystä ja Berthan näytelmän nimen symboliikkaa. Nimi on alluusio P.B. Shelleyn runoon Ozymandias, joka käsittelee yhteiskunnan rakenteiden murtumista. Pohdin myös sitä, miten novellin lopun tapahtumat tukevat Berthan miehen kykenemättömyyttä vastaanottaa muutoksia yhteiskunnan luomissa sukupuolirooleissa.

Analyysini viimeinen osio käsittelee sitä, miten näissä kahdessa novellissa teemat sukupuoliroolien aiheuttamista ongelmista esiintyvät samankaltaisesti mutta kuitenkin erilaisesti. Siinä missä Jim herää siihen, että hän ei pystykään toteuttamaan kaikkea mitä yhteiskunta häneltä miehenä odottaa, Berthan mies on kykenemätön ymmärtämään hänen vaimonsa kokemaa heräämistä samaan asiaan. Molemmat miehet kokevat ahdistusta sukupuoliroolien vaatimusten seurauksena, mutta eri syistä. Täten päättelenkin viimeisessä osiossa, että yhteiskunnan aiheuttamat sukupuoliroolit ja niiden vaatimukset ovat haitallisia näille tavallisille yhteiskunnan jäsenille, vaikkakin yhteiskunnan patriarkaalisuus asettaa heidät naisten yläpuolelle. Tämä tarkoittaa sitä, että pelkkä valta-asema yhteiskunnassa ei tee ihmistä onnelliseksi.

Viimeiseksi tiivistän tutkimukseni tulokset ja vastaan kertaalleen vielä tutkimuskysymyksiini. Totean myös, että vaikka tämä tutkielma avaa miesten asemaa ja heidän kokemiaan hankaluuksia patriarkalisessa yhteiskunnassa, nämä novellit olisi aivan yhtä hyvin tarjonneet alustan feministisen kritiikin mukaiselle luennalle. Tällöin olisin keskittynyt pohtimaan Irenen potemaa ahdistusta joutuessaan elämään neljän seinän sisällä, ja sitä miten tämä tietysti vaikuttaa hänen käytökseensä Jimiä kohtaan. Olisin myös voinut pohtia sitä, miten Bertha edustaa feminististä liikettä rikkoessaan rajoja kieltäytyessään toimimaan naisiin kohdistettujen vaatimusten mukaisesti. Lopulta totean, että tutkimukseni on tärkeä, sillä diskurssi sukupuoliroolien aiheuttamista ongelmista on edelleen ajankohtainen, mutta on hyvä todeta, että olemme päässeet kuitenkin pitkälle novellien kuvaamasta tilanteesta, ja kuljemme siis oikeaan suuntaan.