Shame, Masculinity and Desire of Belonging in the Novels of Hanif Kureishi, Philip Roth and Hubert Klimko-Dobrzaniecki, 1997-2007.

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis provides a comparative study of male shame in Hanif Kureishi’s *Intimacy* (1998), Philip Roth’s *Everyman* (2006) and *Portnoy’s Complaint* (1969), and finally Hubert Klimko-Dobrzaniecki’s *Raz. Dwa. Trzy* (2007). As this reading of the novels reveals, shame in the male characters results from a failure to measure up to the hegemonic ideal of masculinity promoted in their respective cultures. This study shows that shame is an emotion, which conditions masculinity protecting the powerful hierarchies that exist between different masculinities and between men and women. This reading of shame as applied to masculinity in Polish, British and American contexts aims to expose those hierarchies demonstrating the liberating potential of shame, which can queer traditional masculinity allowing new forms of masculinity to emerge. The analysis of male shame illuminates further the clash between male gender, constructed primarily as a symbol of power, and shame considered as a disempowering and emasculating emotion.

The writers selected for this analysis hold a status of the cultural other: Kureishi as British-Pakistani, Roth as Jewish-American and Klimko-Dobrzaniecki as born in Silesia, a borderline region between Poland, Germany and the Czech Republic. The writers’ status and personal experience is mirrored in their male protagonists’ sexuality, ethnic and class belonging. Significantly, in their texts, the writers represent diasporic masculinity which clashes with the hegemonic ideal promoted by their respective cultures. Drawing on David Gilmore’s concept of ‘achieved manhood’, Elspeth Probyn’s notion of ‘belonging’ and Raewyn Connell’s concept of ‘masculinity crisis’ this study explains why shame occurs as a result of the male protagonists’ failure to secure their place within the realm of the hegemonic masculinity. The interdisciplinary approach taken in this study draws heavily on a post-colonial conceptual framework mainly due to the status of shame as both an individual and social emotion; it can be used as a means of social control as well as being a private feeling. This methodological approach facilitates the literary analysis of shame, embodied for instance in the images of the penis as expressing or failing to express virility and potency in the characters, as well as investigation of narrative expressions of shame examined through different concepts linked to the emotion, namely, gaze in Kureishi’s *Intimacy*, hardness and softness in Roth’s novels *Everyman* and *Portnoy’s Complaint*, and dirt and disgust in *Raz. Dwa. Trzy* by Hubet Klimko-Dobrzaniecki.
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I would like to dedicate this thesis to the memory of my father.
Declaration of Originality

This thesis and the work to which it refers are the results of my own efforts. Any ideas, data, images or text resulting from the work of others (whether published or unpublished) are fully identified as such within the work and attributed to their originator in the text, bibliography or in footnotes. This thesis has not been submitted in whole or in part for any other academic degree or professional qualification. I agree that the University has the right to submit my work to the plagiarism detection service TurnitinUK for originality checks. Whether or not drafts have been so-assessed, the University reserves the right to require an electronic version of the final document (as submitted) for assessment as above.
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INTRODUCTION

"The color, the place, the history of bodies all come alive in shame".  

A parable by the Polish philosopher Leszek Kołakowski entitled "The Tale of a Great Shame" (1989) describes the story of a soldier Rio who, while doing his military service, began to feel ashamed when he could not remember the colour of the eyes of his beloved Muria. Neither could he recall the colour of her hair. Rio was about to write to Muria asking her for help but he feared that admitting his failure would cause even greater shame. His shame was so great that the soldier began to shrink, in the end reaching the size of a man's finger. Before long, Rio was jailed and, because of his diminished size, he was placed in a food can. The judge sentenced him to "fading away from shame" explaining that he broke the army code, which states that a soldier "may not be ashamed, because he might shrink and thereby diminish his fighting ability" (Kołakowski 88). This tale illustrates how admitting shame triggers even greater shame in men. Shame, in the story about Rio, expressed metaphorically as the sensation of shrinking, makes men vulnerable and, therefore, diminishes them in the eyes of others. In addition to insights on the private dimension of shame, the story reflects on shame being used for disciplinary purposes. More specifically, Kołakowski presents shame within the army context, a

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1 The citation comes from Elspeth Probyn's work, *The Blush: Faces of Shame* (2006) to which I refer at several occasions in this study (40).
2 In *The Civilizing Process* (1978) Norbert Elias claims that shame is a key component of educational and socio-political development. In his study of the development of personality and social norms of the last centuries, Elias notices change in the advice on manners in the eighteenth century - with a reference to, for instance, *The Education of Girls* by Von Raumer, which advises mothers how to answer the sexual questions of their daughters. What was earlier said openly begins to be entirely unsaid, or only hinted at. This starts a repression of many subjects, from now on unspeakable, just to mention farting, burping and human secretions, which have become even more shameful topics than sex. The moral shift was intensified in the nineteenth century. European institutions produced papers
space marked by almost blind subordination of the soldiers to their commanders, where, significantly, shaming becomes a powerful tool of punishment, on the one hand, while it also appears a prohibited emotion because of its power to weaken fighting ability; in other words, shame may make soldiers less violent or even ‘soft’.

The above story provides examples of how shame conditions masculinity. Shame is used to introduce discipline and to maintain powerful hierarchies between different kinds of masculinities: those perceived as dominant and others subjugated to them. Moreover, the denial of shame provides a basis for the construction of hegemonic masculinity of which one of the examples is a patriarchal masculinity. As a denied emotion in men, shame is made invisible and powerful, which helps to sustain hierarchies among men, but also between men and women. Admitting shame therefore, can be a first step towards deconstructing these hierarchies. A closer look at shame, its sources, causes and effects exposes the complex relations of power between those holding the dominant social positions and others who are subordinated to the hegemonic ideologies. Through a reading of shame as applied to masculinity in Polish, British and American contexts, this study aims to demonstrate that exposing the ways in which shame conditions masculinity can alleviate the “suffocating clasp of patriarchy” allowing new forms of masculinity to emerge (Connor 2000 “The Shame of Being a Man”[online]). Furthermore, this study shows and books on proper behaviour and manners, often proposing practices of shaming as a way of introducing moral discipline. All of this coincided with the spreading of Calvinist and Christian ideas, which promoted self-improvement and virtue as a way of living (Elias 179-80).

3 The concept of hegemonic masculinity used in this study is largely informed by Raewyn Connell’s work *Masculinities* (1995), in which she defines hegemonic masculinity as the “configuration of gender practice” which guarantees the dominant position of men and “the subordination of women” whereas the acceptance of this order provides legitimacy for patriarchy. Connell states: “It is the successful claim to authority, more than direct violence that is the mark of hegemony” (Connell 77). In this study, I also refer to Connell’s definition of patriarchy as the cultural and social acceptance (but also facilitating) of men’s privileged position in society and their assumed power over women.
that shame allows us to understand patriarchal structures (Connell 1995) as oppressive not only for women, by subjugating them to men’s rule, but also impacting on men as well, mostly by promoting some patterns of masculinity as superior to other expressions of male subjectivity. In particular, reading male narratives of shame may further our understanding of the phenomenon of ‘masculinity crisis’, which in a colloquial sense refers to men’s anxiety and confusion about their roles in ever changing social conditions. In my analysis of male shame, I examine three instances where the characters’ masculinity clashes with the dominant ideal of masculinity that is valid for their national context, resulting in a feeling of shame in the characters. The novels, which provide the textual material for this analysis of male shame are *Intimacy* (1998) by Hanif Kureishi, *Portnoy’s Complaint* (1969) and *Everyman* (2006) by Philip Roth, and *Raz Dwa. Trzy* (2007) by Hubert Klimko-Dobrzaniecki.

At the first glance, the authors selected for this study appear to differ greatly; yet, the reading of their novels reveals a number of similarities and parallels between them. Most apparent is the intense embodiment of shame found in all texts as well as the confessional mode of the narrative. In these novels, the writers expose asymmetric power relations between the diasporic masculinity they represent, evident in Kureishi’s engagement with Pakistani and Roth’s with Jewish masculinity, and the idealized model of masculinity promoted by their respective cultures. Parallels can be drawn between these two writers and Hubert Klimko-Dobrzaniecki

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4 In *Masculinities*, Raewyn Connell explains the meaning of the term: “[t]he concept of crisis tendencies needs to be distinguished from the colloquial sense in which people speak of a ‘crisis of masculinity’. As a theoretical term ‘crisis’ presupposes a coherent system of some kind, which is destroyed or restored by the outcome of the crisis” (84). As Connell argues masculinity is not a coherent system but “a configuration of practice within a system of gender relations”. That is why she claims that crisis tendencies, or proclaiming a crisis of masculinity, should be seen as an attempt to restore traditional (and dominant) masculinity, perceived as such coherent construction (84).
who portrays three young boys living in Lower Silesia, a place located at the fringe of the Polish South-West border. The characters’ in-betweenness, which is characteristic of diasporic masculinity, is further highlighted by their coming-of-age status as well as their search for masculine ideals in other cultures, American and British, rather than Polish. Furthermore, the novels’ shamelessness is the feature that also strongly links them to each other. Despite the different cultural and national contexts represented in these novels, they make the reader ‘blush’, although not always from shame. The scenes in these novels may evoke a ‘hot flush’; that, which is experienced when a person is faced with matters considered private and taboo. This is because the texts flout traditional taboos thereby producing narratives designed to shock the reader. In addition, in these novels, the male body has been exposed without any inhibitions with frequent images of the penis appearing in the contexts of masturbation, urinating, intercourse or impotency. This shameless exposure is further emphasized by the narrative style, mostly the first person narrative, which positions the reader as a confessor of the characters’ shameful secrets. Finally, the writers validate those confessions by suggesting an autobiographical element since, in all the texts analysed, the characters appear to mirror the writers’ features and their real experiences.

Through attaching shame to issues of sexuality, ethnicity and class in those texts, the above writers demonstrate the potential of shame to queer; that is to question and subvert what is perceived as normative. In my approach to queering, I

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5 Silesia is a region of Central Europe located mostly in Poland with smaller parts in Czech Republic and Germany. The Polish part of the region was incorporated into the country’s territories after the Second World War (by the order of the Soviet Union, who, at the time, occupied German Silesia). The question of ethnic and national belonging in the region inhabited by four different ethnic groups, namely Czechs, Germans, Ukrainians and Poles, is problematic. See: Ethnic Groups of Europe (2011) edited by Jeffrey E. Cole.
take on Sally Munt’s understanding of queering not simply as challenging the heterosexual hegemony, but more broadly, as a transgression of a norm. In *Queer Attachments* (2008), Munt defines queering as “a kind of sick, criminal interrogation, a threat to impurity to the social body, a dread of ruin” (Munt 22). Queering defined as such engages with Mary Douglas’ concept of pollution, dirt, and taboo, which equally demonstrates the potential to challenge that which is perceived as normative.

In *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (1966, republished 2003) – the analysis upon which Julia Kristeva developed her notion of abjection – Douglas explains how pollution and taboo participate in the process of establishing social order, where, specifically, dirty and polluted subjects belong to the social margins. Douglas’ insights on how these concepts apply differently to different genders and ethnicities are instructive in interpreting the marginalised status of characters’ masculinity but also in reading the characters’ narratives as subversive, or indeed, shameless. Since dirt and taboo, and thus the matters perceived as polluting, threaten the normative order and what is considered appropriate, by engaging with and exposing the ‘polluting’ subjects the writers can be viewed as disturbing, challenging or even attempting to ruin this order.

The novels selected for this analysis were written during and after the 1990s, a decade marked by the third wave of feminism in the West and emerging gender studies in Poland, which also coincided with the growing field of masculinity studies as an academic discipline. The most notable work of the 1990’s feminism is Judith Butler’s *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990), where she explores the correlation between biological sex and gender. Butler writes: “the distinction between sex and gender serves the argument that whatever the biological
intractability sex appears to have, gender is culturally constructed” (Butler 8). Such discourses resulted in blurring of the strict boundaries between masculinity and femininity and, furthermore, provoked men’s insecurities about what particular behaviours define them as manly. Such anxieties in men frequently result in exaggerating the traditional masculine features embodied for instance in hyper-masculinity, sexism and misogynistic attitudes; the latter expresses tendencies to blame women for men’s problems. These issues, which can be found represented in the novels discussed in this study, are often denoted as the ‘masculinity crisis’, which is a notion commonly used to describe men’s struggles with their identity. In my approach to the masculinity crisis, I refer to a number of scholars who critique the notion of crisis, such as Raewyn Connell and Hashemi Yekani, who point out how the discourses of crisis serve as a specific re-privileging narrative strategy characteristic of, predominantly, hegemonic masculinity. As Yekani argues: “it is the normative and unmarked position of White masculinity that lends narratives of hegemonic masculinity in crisis such a cultural momentum of standing for the whole of mankind” (Yekani 16). Yekani points out that, in traditional thinking, masculinity has been perceived as a universal category and therefore it is assumed that it does not require analysing. Butler makes a similar remark in Gender Trouble stating that in the traditional thinking of gender “the universal person and the masculine gender are conflated” (Butler 9). However, feminist thinkers, such as Butler herself, undermine this view. The invisibility of masculinity as a subject of

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6 In her approach to the body, Butler has been drawing on ideas outlined in Mary Douglas’ Purity and Danger. Butler claims that the boundaries of the body have been drawn to instate certain taboos about limits and possibilities of exchange: “the body is itself a consequence of taboos that render that body discrete by virtue of its stable boundaries” (133).

7 The category ‘White men’ has historically been conflated with normativity writes Sally Robinson in Marked Men: White Masculinity Crisis (2000) who refers to specifically American social context.

8 Simone de Beauvoir writes in the Introduction to The Second Sex (1949), a benchmark work for feminism: “[a] man never begins by presenting himself as an individual of a certain sex; it goes without saying that he is a man” (xxxviii).
study is one of the reasons why traditional views on masculinity remain deeply influential, and, hence, improving the visibility of masculinity in a public discourse is one of the ways to undermine the stereotypes about masculinity. By approaching masculinity through shame, an emotion considered unmanly, this study challenges one of these traditional preconceptions about masculinity.

In *Pinks, Pansies, and Punks: The Rhetoric of Masculinity in American Literary Culture* (2010), James Penner writes that “the mythic cultural masculine” is often associated with opposing qualities to female qualities with emotionality being evidently a domain of the latter. Men are defined through “intellect or reason rather than nature, rationality rather than emotion, stasis rather than mutability, and, above all else, a propensity for aggression rather than passivity” (11). In *Men and Masculinities* (2002), Stephen M. Whitehead argues that the result of the construction of masculinity as based on “denial of emotion”, which Whitehead sees as “men’s ontological relationship to self and other”, is that “men don’t see what they are seeing when they see themselves” (356). In other words, what Whitehead seems to be arguing is that without acknowledging their emotions men cannot look at themselves critically and reflectively. This view is voiced even more forcibly by Victor J. Sadler who, in his work *Young Men and Masculinities* (2006), claims that suppression of emotions becomes a way of “affirming a ‘hegemonic’ masculinity”. Although this is most relevant among young men, masculinity in general can never be “taken for granted” and it is mainly through showing “control over their emotional

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9 In *Queer Attachments* (2007), Sally Munt touches upon the differences in manifestation of emotions in men and women stressing the role of psychology and psychoanalysis in promoting the image of emotional self-control in men as a social norm. She writes: “Within Western traditions of psychology and psychoanalysis a healthy person is one that knows how to manage and contain ‘their’ emotions within the individual self. This masculine bounded self has become ubiquitously aspirational”. As Munt argues, its reverse, that is emotionality, is considered ‘feminine’ (Munt 13).
lives" that men prove they are 'man enough' (Sadler 52). Since the construction of male gender appears to be based on a denial of emotion, the opposite, namely a close look at the emotional side of men's lives, seems the most effective way of investigating it but also, considering Sadler's claim, a way of subverting hegemonic masculinity. Taking into consideration the above remarks about men and emotion, it appears that shame, considered an emasculating and disempowering emotion, demonstrates particular potential to challenge that image of a 'tough' man: stable and in control.

Hanif Kureishi, Philip Roth and Hubert Klimko-Dobrzaniecki write against this tendency of disclosing emotions. Moreover, they make shame the primary emotion with which they engage. In their male protagonists, shame frequently appears in such psychosomatic symptoms as a sensation of shrinking, paralysis or a heat. On the other hand, the body of the protagonists becomes the source of shame as well, in particular, when it fails to express virility. The instances in the texts when the characters describe a failure to perform intercourse, illness or their body appearing 'soft' and effeminate, that is, exposing features considered feminine qualities are all indicated as a source of emasculation for the characters. As is apparent from the above examples, these characters' shame predominantly relates to their sense of being manly, or more precisely, to their failure to achieve what they perceive as the masculine ideal. Jay, a middle-aged protagonist of Hanif Kureishi's Intimacy, struggles to find a place for himself within his family home for he asks: "what men are for? Do they serve any useful function these days?" (115). This questioning, which leads to Jay's decision to leave his partner in front of whom he

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10 Helen Block Lewis comments on the embodiment of shame: "[u]nlike guilt, shame is deeply embodied: one blushes, sweats, has a quickened heart rate. Yet despite the arousal, one feels bodily frozen, paralyzed, exposed and unable to escape or hide" (qtd. in Zarem 5).
feels ashamed, and his middle-class lifestyle, suggests directionlessness and confusion about what it means to be a man in contemporary British society. Similar preoccupations about men’s role in American society are expressed by Philip Roth’s character in *Everyman*, studied in comparison to the 1969 novel of the writer, *Portnoy’s Complaint*. Both novels focus on the Jewish male body, as expressing, or failing to express, the protagonists’ virility and, thus, becoming a source of shame. Finally, *Raz. Dwa. Trzy*, a novel by a Polish writer abroad, Hubert Klimko-Dobrzaniecki, provides a perspective of three teenage characters and their struggles to become men as they oppose different forms of emasculation and shaming brought by their parents, community and the communist regime.

In this study, I draw on masculinity studies and shame studies, which illuminate how shame conditions masculinity and how masculinity conditions shame. Theories of shame and masculinity frequently merge, or become a part of discourses on postcolonialism, in particular with regard to those aspects of patriarchal and colonial legacy which relate to the abuse of power and hold responsibility for social inequalities, many of which are discussed in the course of this thesis. Studies on men and masculinity have been developing since the 1960s and research on the subject was primarily produced by feminist thinkers, mainly in the context of their critique of patriarchy and other forms of oppression. “The rapid spread of masculinity studies in the last decade of the twentieth century” (Adams and Savran 6) coincided with discourses of a crisis of masculinity and the need for men to regain their power and position, such as is proposed in Robert Bly’s *Iron John: A Book about Men* (1990), discussed in the next chapter. The aforementioned Raewyn Connell’s *Masculinities* (1995) attempts to explain the crisis of masculinity as reflecting men’s anxiety about
their position within the gender order. Another author, whose works laid the foundation for the growing study of masculinity, is Michael Kimmel considered “the father of Men’s Studies as an academic discipline” (Schoene-Harwood ix).\textsuperscript{11} The intersection of shame studies, masculinity studies and postcolonial research, brought together in this study, unravels the complex dependencies between gender, emotions and power.

Shame and Masculinity

The preconception that it is shameful for a man to feel shame expressed in Kołakowski’s fictional story, has been nevertheless implied in other academic fields.\textsuperscript{12} As sociological research reveals, men are being socialized to express emotions differently than women. Sociologist Thomas Scheff (2006) argues that most men are trained from early childhood to suppress all vulnerable emotions, especially fear, grief and shame (4). More insights on the matter are provided by Deborah Kerfoot who, in her notes on intimacy, argues that men’s attitude to emotions is dictated by masculine gender norms, which require control and strength, whereas showing emotions may be threatening in that it necessitates “‘letting go’ of the script that fashions the responses of masculine subjects” (237). Being emotional requires revealing the aspects of themselves that may show them as frail and

\textsuperscript{11} The majority of Michael Kimmel’s work is dedicated to issues of masculinity in national, as well as global contexts. He published a number of books on British and English masculinity, such as his 2005 study \textit{The History of Men: Essays On The History Of American And British Masculinities}. Kimmel is an editor of \textit{Men and Masculinities}, SAGE interdisciplinary journal of men studies. He is a leader of a project, which aims at establishing a centre for the Study of Men and Masculinities at Stony Brook University.

\textsuperscript{12} This is most literally expressed in the title of an article by the Silesian male author Szczepan Twardoch published in \textit{Polityka} magazine in November 2012. The title “Wstydzę się wstydu” translates as ‘I am ashamed of being ashamed’. An even stronger statement has been made by Steven Connor who argues that being a man is shameful in itself. I discuss Connor’s article later in the thesis.
vulnerable, which in today’s culture of “work organizations” that require commitment and professionalism may put men’s position at risk (Kerfoot 237). In On Shame and The Search for Identity (1958), Helen Merrell Lynd defines shame as the emotion of exposure of “peculiarly sensitive, intimate, vulnerable aspects of the self”, what, according to her, is reflected in the root meaning of the word “to uncover, to expose, to wound” (27). Other shame theorists stress the exposure, but equally the paralysing and disempowering qualities of shame. In his book Shame: the Exposed Self (1995), Michael Lewis observes that in shame we become “the subject as well as the object of shame” where the self focuses on itself causing “confusion: inability to think clearly, inability to talk, and inability to act” (M. Lewis 34). It is those insights into shame that raise a number of questions, such as why emotions, and shame in particular, are not desirable in men and to what extent is that determined by the politics of gender? Since shame in men has to be neglected, how can they manifest the emotion, or using Salman Rushdie’s question in Shame (1989), “what happens to all that unfelt shame?” (Rushdie 122).13 Finally, if shame is considered emasculating for men, what insights into the way male gender is constructed can be gained from looking into it specifically?

It could be argued, that considering what has been said about shame in men so far, by introducing male protagonists who frequently admit to feeling shame disclosing their fears and desires, the writers undermine the cultural patterns of hegemonic masculinity in the context represented by them. One of the pieces of evidence for it are the critical responses to the texts, frequently considered to reflect the writers’ own intimate lives, where the critics ‘shame into inappropriateness’ the texts and the writers themselves. In “The Grapes of Roth”, Leil Leibovitz suggests

13 I discuss Rushdie’s novel in the next chapter.
that Philip Roth’s place in the American canon “deserves a second look”
complaining that “Roth’s legacy of writerly narcissism left a generation of young
novelists with the wrong idea of what makes great literature” (Lebovitz “The Grapes
of Roth”[online]). Curiously, in his comment Leibovitz links a non-narcissistic
masculinity, to what defines canonical literature. Similar objections were addressed
to two other writers of this study. Cressida Connolly refers to Intimacy as “a
repugnant little book”, where ‘little’, in the reviewer’s opinion, refers not so much to
the size of the book as to its questionable artistic and moral value (Connolly
“Ambassador for the Bad Bloke”). Finally, Hubert Klimko-Dobrzaniecki’s novel
Raz. Dwa. Trzy, described by Grzegorz Czekanski as “ugly literature” appears to
have been silenced in the literary market compared to the writer’s other works which
have been promoted and republished (313). The critical opinions about the writers
and their works introduced above reflect certain expectations of what literature
created by male authors should look like. James Penner (2011) provides an
interesting perspective on how to interpret such criticism. According to the critic, for
the male writer, masculine identity is often inextricably linked to the act of writing:

(…) the importance of masculine identity in the act of writing and how
an attack in print, and publication itself to this day, resemble a pugilistic
contest in which one’s literary performance is often perceived as an
external expression of one’s virility and propensity for masculine
domination (Penner 9).

One such example of the literary ‘expression of virility’ is a remark by Kureishi’s
character Jay, who is a writer: “How do I like to write? With a soft pencil and a hard
dick – not the other way round” (Intimacy 62). Jay links the act of writing to his
sexual organ, which is ‘hard’ during the process of writing. ‘Hardness’, in Penner’s findings, should be seen as representing phallic dominance. As Penner argues hardness is not “merely a phallic fantasy” but culturally and psychologically it “functions as a powerful structuring mechanism that shapes and influences male behavior and masculine gender norms. Hardness is tacitly encouraged and understood as a social ideal while softness is overtly stigmatized” (15). In Kureishi’s text, however, a literal treatment of hardness as ‘hard’ penis, may be interpreted as a mockery of the phallic ‘subtext’.

These ideas of hardness, and softness, further translate into images of the male and female body in the cultural psyche. While traditionally, in Western societies, the female body symbolizes maternity, eroticism and weakness thus softness, the male body represents power, authority and strength, an embodiment of hardness.14 Although these patterns of masculinity and femininity may be constantly modulated, permitting ‘hardness’ and physical fitness as feminine qualities in women, the physical strength in men still seems to constitute an essence of manliness: “hardness in women, but never softness in men” (Bordo 292). The feminist thinker, Susan Bordo, stresses that shame indeed is an undesirable emotion in men for it is considered a softening emotion. With a reference to American culture specifically she writes: “[T]o be exposed as “soft” at the core is one of the worst things a man can suffer in this culture” (Bordo 55). All three writers engage with the ideas of hardness, and softness as opposing virility, portrayed as the effeminate body (Raz, Dwa, Trzy), Jewish softness (Portnoy’s Complain), the aging body (Everyman) or

14 In the “Phallus and the Penis”, a section of the volume Revealing Male Bodies (2002), the authors demonstrate that hardness mainly expresses phallic power: “The Western cultural ideal of the phallus represents the attributes of traditionally defined masculinity: hardness, invulnerability, physical mastery, and dominance” (Tuana 5).
impotency, of which various embodiments are found in all texts. In addition, the
texts are encrusted with explicit sexual scenes, masturbation and images of the penis,
which may give the impression of the writers as being obscene and promiscuous. As
becomes apparent in the course of this study, the exhibition of the penis in those texts
can be read in terms of phallic symbolism with the penis embodying both qualities;
hardness and softness. The protagonists’ emphasis on sexual conquests of women
frequently reflects the insecurity of their position in the larger social context, or is a
reflection of the masculinity ‘crisis’ which they compensate for with pleasure and
sex.

The term ‘crisis’, however, expresses the gradual loss of privileges and
power enjoyed by some groups of men. Raewyn Connell, in her work Masculinities
(1995), argues the term crisis “presupposes a coherent system of some kind”
however masculinity is not a ‘coherent system’ one could destroy (85). A similar
view on the notion of crisis is presented by Elahe Haschemi Yekani, who in her book
The Privilege of Crisis (2011), which is nevertheless inspired by Connell’s work,
argues that the crisis may have as its purpose restoration of a hegemonic masculinity:
“proclaiming a crisis often entails a restorative impulse” (16). In her study, which
focuses on the narratives of the masculinity crisis in colonial and postcolonial
literature, Yekani draws on the work of authors such as Rudyard Kipling and Joseph
Conrad, as well as, what she refers to as contemporary postcolonial writers, such as
J. M. Coetzee and Hanif Kureishi, to demonstrate how recurrent references to a crisis
of masculinity, or a decline of masculinity, serve largely to manifest and support
positions of male privilege. In this study, I take on the view that the notion of ‘crisis’
applies predominantly to a hegemonic masculinity. Additionally, and crucially for
this study of shame, hegemonic masculinity, as Yekani (2011) and Connell (1995) point out, refers almost exclusively to White masculinity, where 'Whiteness' should be perceived as a socially constructed concept connected to cultural dominance. Yekani writes: "hegemonic masculinity is dependent on the racial marker of Whiteness as Whiteness is associated with 'normalness' and 'simply being human' in the West" (29). Consequently, hegemony, which is a structural relation of power, disclaims the position of marginalised masculinities, defined mostly on the basis of racial and class belonging or sexuality, for instance non-white and gay masculinities. The expression 'marginalised masculinity' encompasses diasporic masculinity too, which is beyond the dominant models of masculinity. Marginalised and hegemonic masculinity do not form, in any way, a stable opposition; rather they are based on constant re-positioning, with class, race and other categories of "social stratification" influencing it (Yekani 30). As explained by Yekani, the label hegemonic masculinity is useful for it describes "an idealised phantasmatic position that is powerful in shaping the discourse of crisis and hinges on a continuous process of 'Othering' (30). What marginalised masculinity is, it is important to stress, depends very much on the context.

Writing shame

Writing about one's private shame positions the writers within a wider context of confessions of shame. In the fourth century, St. Augustine writes in Book IV of his Confessions "I shall nevertheless confess to you my shame, since it is for your praise" (52). Fourteen centuries later, a similar emphasis of the apparent struggles to confess shame can be found in Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who in Confessions (1782)
writes “the first and most painful step in the dark slimy maze of my confessions”, explaining further that “[i]t is not crimes that cost me to speak, but what is ridiculous and shameful” (qtd. in Krondorfer 1). The French philosopher Gilles Deleuze, begins his Essays Critical and Clinical (1989) with a statement: “The shame of being a man, is there a better reason to write?” (52). Steven Connor takes up Deleuze’s rhetorical question and, in his article “The Shame of Being a Man” (2000), makes a powerful statement that being a man is shameful in itself. The scholar observes: “being a man has always been a bit of a gamble, and has always involved jeopardy, the risk of falling short of being a man” (Connor). Furthermore, this male author provides a long list of reasons for men to be ashamed for instance having privileges in society just as a result of being born men, being educated in violence and machismo and agreeing to take on such roles that often lead to hurting other people. To add to this ‘shameful’ image of male gender, Connor sees men as obsessed with power, with “will-to-manhood” and with a need to impose their will onto others. Nevertheless, as Connor observes, writing about shame has a liberating effect:

The moment that you can say that you are ashamed, you break free of shame’s suffocating clasp and start puffing the pungent whiff of imposture, even though you are now exposed to the new, but only minor shame of having distorted your shame into intelligibility, shame made over into wordy sham. You have in fact taken on one of the many ‘masks of shame’ (Connor 2000 “The Shame of Being a Man” [online]).

Reflecting on shame’s power to abject and deform, Sally Munt (2008), who refers to this ability of shame as ‘queering’, notices how shame can produce “new forms of sociality” whereas unexamined shame may “obscure vital political connections”
In her study, she refers to various forms of power structure, such as class and ethnic hierarchies, and it is this particular positioning that produces collective emotions.

According to Munt, the notion of queer itself has been ‘colonised’ to name non-normative sexualities, mainly gay sexuality, whereas the original meaning of queer, understood as “perplexing, curious, unexpected, remarkable” or “sick, ill, homosexual, to quiz, to cheat, to spoil” reveals how queer can disrupt and subvert what is perceived as normative (Munt 22). Queering of diaspora, which has been recognized by Hashemi Yekani in Kureishi’s writing, also features in Philip Roth’s masquerading of Jewishness; that is highlighting Jewishness by a number of stereotypical features. As Anna Gutman in Writing Indians and Jews (2013) argues, Jewish identity had been a touchstone for the development of South Asian subjectivities mirrored in the portrayal of South Asian diaspora writers, such as Hanif Kureishi (20). Indeed, Kureishi admits to having been influenced by Roth’s representation of Jewishness (Maxey 12).15 On the other hand, in Legacy of Rage (2001), a study on Jewish masculinity, Warren Rosenberg states that the model of Jewishness represented in Philip Roth had been inspired by the Eastern European Jewish male. More precisely, in Rosenberg’s view, Roth’s Jewish character “has defined himself (and has been defined) against emerging European masculine values”.16 Those are, according to Rosenberg, Christian and other ideals, mainly a


16 It is worth introducing here Ross Posnock’s remark about Roth’s cosmopolitanism and a need to read the writer’s work in a transnational context: “Roth’s cosmopolitanism has created a body of work that is best understood in an international context – American, European and Eastern European” (76). The latter is also due to Roth’s translation work on Eastern European writers, mainly Chekhov and Kafka, whose writing style influenced the aesthetics of Roth’s fictions. One of such references to both writers, seems to be Roth’s use of hyperbole: the exaggeration of the characters’ features evident for instance in Alex Portnoy’s obsession with masturbation or his nose.
“muscled, aggressive manliness” often manifested in Western history (2). In Roth this tendency to oppose the model of masculinity described by Rosenberg is most evident in Roth’s staging of various forms of softness with which his characters struggle. What the above remarks highlight, is that masculinities are constructed through interacting not only with local and national patterns of masculinity but also through interacting and mixing of patterns from beyond the local context. The writers also reflect similar preoccupations of men that are related to changes in the approach to gender roles, men’s experience within the family, bodily issues and sexuality as well as the new ways of being a man from that of, for instance, their fathers. However, they differ in terms of the national and local context represented in their texts.

As I attempt to demonstrate, a comparative approach to masculinity appears one of the greatest strengths of this study. In *Masculinities and Culture* (2001), John Beynon observes that most of the literature about masculinity is about “British and American men by British and American men and women” whereas studies of masculinity in other cultures are “few, but are extremely valuable for the light they throw on masculinity as a cultural phenomenon” (62). Beynon argues it is too easily assumed that contemporary Western masculinity is the universal norm and, as it can be imagined, the lack of comparative studies contributes to sustaining this perception. In the “Introduction” to *Dislocating Masculinity* (1994), one of the very few studies on men in different cultures, Andrea Cornwall and Nancy Lindisfarne point out that the rhetoric of hegemonic versions of masculinity rests precisely on this apparent certainty that “‘a man is a man’ everywhere, and everywhere it means the same thing” (Cornwall and Lindisfarne 3). Furthermore, the authors stress the
significance of a comparative approach to masculinity, which potentially provides
the only way to challenge this view. The monopoly of Western masculinity in male
studies proves that gender research is not free from the politics of exclusion. The
inclusion of the novel by a Polish author, therefore, aims to challenge this stance.
While such a comparative study poses a number of methodological challenges, it also
challenges the notion of ‘a man’ as a universal and stable category across all contexts
and cultures by showing a diversity of patterns. As the presented writers queer
masculinity in their own cultural and national contexts, exposing the ways in which
the hierarchy of masculinity is conditioned by race, ethnicity, class and national
ideology, the comparative approach adds the transnational perspective revealing the
positioning of Western masculinity as a superior model for other cultures. This is
evident from the reading of Raz. Dwa. Trzy, where, in their search for patterns of
male behaviour and ideals, the characters frequently turn to ‘Western masculinity’,
mainly American and British. The presence of the Other, an ‘Eastern European’
author in this study, thus, could be viewed as queering which aims to subvert the
divisions into Western and non-Western masculinities.

As becomes apparent in my reading of the novels, the characters’ practices of
securing their position within the realm of what they perceive as the ideal of
masculinity, whether it is Western masculinity as in the novel Raz. Dwa. Trzy or
white Christian boys as in the case of Alexander Portnoy, express their desire to
belong (Probyn 2005) or to be ‘attached’ (Munt 2008) to this desired group. The
texts touch upon different aspects of male shame, however whatever the characters’
name as a direct source of shame, be it the ageing body in Everyman, growing
breasts in the character of Raz. Dwa. Trzy, the inability to perform intercourse or
failing to build a successful relationship, as in the case of Kureishi’s character Jay, those failures are based on a certain ideal of masculinity, which, when successfully performed, secures various forms of belonging. The notion of belonging as used here has been developed by Elspeth Probyn in her book *Outside Belongings* (1996), where she defines belonging as being captured by other manners of being and “desires of becoming-other”. Probyn suggests belonging is a synonym for ‘identity’:

(...) I slide from the “identity” to “belonging”, in part because I think that the latter term captures more accurately the desire for some sort of attachment be it to other people, places, or modes of being, and the ways in which individuals and groups are caught within wanting to belong, wanting to become, a process that is fuelled by yearning rather than the positing of identity as a stable state. (...) This movement of desiring belonging is for me a defining feature of our postmodern, postcolonial times (...) (19).

According to Probyn, the idea of belonging seems more important than identity to express the human necessity to position oneself in relation to others. As the scholar points out, it is useful to think of belonging as something more momentary, as neither fixed nor stable. Indeed, her definition of belonging as an impulse for “some sort of attachment” corresponds with what is evoked by the occurrence of shame, namely, a fear of detachment (Probyn 19). “Shame is a ferocious attack on the self” that occurs in response to rejection, failure and defeat, not so much in the eyes of others, as in our own eyes, suggests Helen Block Lewis (1987, 1). Hence, shame reveals our aspirations and desires since only something we care about can bring about shame. Shame defined as fear of detachment, or shame as a “threat to social
bond”, as Helen Block Lewis describes it in *Shame and Guilt in Neurosis* (1971), I apply to my analysis of male shame, since this definition appears to capture most accurately the kind of emotion that occurs as a result of not meeting the standards by which manliness is measured.

**Methodology**

According to Helen Block Lewis shame is a ‘sleeper’ emotion; that is, an emotion which is not obviously discernible and which appears in many disguises. As a practitioner psychiatrist who has listened to hundreds of narratives, Lewis concludes: “while guilt is usually well-worded and easily accessible, shame is more silent” (Zarem 2006 “A Homage to Helen Block Lewis” [online]). Lewis’ statement, however, raises a question concerning whether shame can ever be discerned; that is what are the narrative means that express it and what are suitable methods of analyzing shame in literary works? Such a task appears almost impossible when looking into Timothy Bewes’ claim that shame is “a gap, an absence, an experience that is incongruous with its own acknowledgment” for shame does not have an object that may be isolated from the subject, concludes the critic (14). His book, *The Event of Postcolonial Shame* (2011), sets out, as he stresses, from the acknowledgment of the “impossibility of any literary-critical study of shame as such” and, as he argues further, no study of shame can “deal easily with the paradox that to make shame comprehensible would be to dissolve the feeling” (3). Nevertheless, in the consecutive chapters of his book, Bewes moves onto analysis of shame in the works of Joseph Conrad, T.E. Lawrence, J.M.Coetzee and others. What makes it possible, explains Bewes, is that shame in literary works does not exist “in some buried state”, but rather, shame “appears overtly, as the text’s experience of its own inadequacy”
According to Bewes the body of theory that can be associated with the 'problem of incommensurability' is postcolonial studies since postcolonial theory is founded on the "unanswerability" of questions such as the following "is there any position from which to write that is not itself implicated in the history of colonial inequality". The study of shame, hence, involves the postcolonial perspective since the occurrence of shame reveals a unique positioning and power inequalities, which are a part of colonial legacy. It could be concluded therefore, that the writers who expose shame, expose also its very roots and question by whose values is something shameful. In the end then, exploring shame leads to questioning standards, ideals and values of given social orders.

These insights impact on the choice of academic works selected for this study, which, more or less directly, engage with the postcolonial condition. Elspeth Probyn's statement placed at the start of this thesis, originates from her work Blush: Faces of Shame where she points out how different factors shaping one's identity, such as the place and surrounding culture, ethnicity and gender, as well as national history "all come alive in shame" (40). In such an approach to shame, Probyn demonstrates the postcolonial perspective highlighting primarily how the individual experience of shame reveals subjugation to various 'regimes', familial, cultural, national and gendered. This multi-layered nature of shame has also been stressed by Sally Munt who argues that shame needs to be investigated from "an interdisciplinary approach, so knotted are its messages" (2) Taking on Munt's call, I employ theories from fields of gender studies, in particular studies on cultural and literary masculinity, as well as sociological and cultural research on shame, which I apply to the literary analysis. The chapters have been organized around each writer,
and each chapter approaches the novels through different concepts related to shame, such as for instance gaze, dirt, hardness and softness as applied to the male characters and their bodies in those texts. The introduced definitions and shame theories explain the, often complex, ways in which the aforementioned concepts relate to shame.

In my reading of the characters’ bodies in the novels, I also refer to Mary Douglas’ (2002) idea of the body as a metaphor of the society; by tracing the taboos and prohibition applied to the body one can learn about the very structure of the society this body represents. Douglas states: “[w]hat is being carved in human flesh is an image of society” (116). The reading of, specifically, the male body, draws on Susan Bordo’s findings on the symbolism of the male body in cultural representations. Both Douglas’ and Bordo’s works are being consulted in an interpretation of the characters’ bodily shame, when the body itself is the source of shame, as well as the shame on the body, which is an embodiment of the feeling of shame. Finally, a number of works on literary masculinity illustrate how male writers reproduce or contradict masculine myths. In particular, I refer to James Penner's study *Pinks, Pansies, and Punks*, which exposes the links between men's writing and masculine stereotypes circulating in society. Penner's insights on how hard and soft masculine models are connected to ethnicity proves particularly useful in reading ethnic masculinity in Roth and Kureishi whereas the critic's reflections on masculinity and Communism in the American context, inspired the reading of masculinity in the communist context described by Klimko-Dobrzaniecki in the novel *Raz.Dwa.Trzy*. 
The first part of the thesis introduces various contexts of shame in relation to male identity, with which the analysed texts engage. A number of theories from fields of sociology, gender and cultural studies introduced in this part, explain shame’s genderization; namely, how distinct manifestations of shame in men and women have been conditioned by the cultural and national politics of gender and sexuality and, as a consequence, different ways shame is manifested in the male and female body. Salman Rushdie’s novel *Shame* (1989) provides a context for a discussion about shame in the patriarchal context where male shame is understood as honour and, moreover, depends greatly on female behaviour: “man’s honour is in his woman” we read in *Shame* (103). Furthermore, this section investigates the ways in which feminist movements of the 1960s have challenged the patriarchal structures contributing to a process of redefining men’s roles in society, and how these changes reposition shame in relation to men. Special attention is placed on the critical analysis of the notion of the masculinity crisis as related to shame, which has been discursively constructed as a ‘side effect’ of feminism. The cultural and anthropological research on masculinity, such as that of Michael Kimmel and David Gilmore, demonstrates how the notion of honour has been substituted for the category of achievement. The texts selected for this literary analysis, reproduce and engage with both contexts, patriarchal and post-feminist, mainly apparent in the conflict between fathers and sons and the clash of values and patterns represented by both generations.17 The last part of this section, explores the cultural and national treatment of shame in those three settings; respectively British, American and Polish.

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17 I use the word post-feminist to describe societies, which have been gradually implementing the ideas of gender equality. By any means the ‘post’ does not indicate the end of this process.
The second chapter of this thesis addresses the novel *Intimacy* by Hanif Kureishi, which deals with issues of class, intimacy and sexual desires all bound together by shame. The analysis of the main protagonist’s intimate relationships is linked to the concept of gaze, developed in that chapter, which sheds light on shame’s social implications; namely, how the private sense of shame relies on various forms of social positioning such as that related to class and race. In Jay’s description, Susan, his long-term partner, who disapproves of and rejects him, is a representative of English middle-class society and since the protagonist confesses to be ashamed ‘in front of her’, this chapter investigates the links between shame and class, as mirrored in Susan’s and Jay’s relationship. Kureishi’s character represents a certain group of men, those shaped by the 1960s and 1970s, who, as it emerges from the text, are doomed to failure and shame. The critique of patriarchy in the Western world redefined male roles in society, yet at the same time, it produced confusion as to what are the new roles for men, and what are the expectations of men in contemporary British society – the questions addressed by Jay in *Intimacy*. The discussion on the challenges faced by British masculinity is supported by Daniel Lea and Berthold Schoene’s *Posting the Male* (2003), a study of masculinities in post-war and contemporary British literature. Different discourses about class, intimacy, sexuality and the body are brought together in this chapter to support an interpretation of Jay’s sense of shame.

The focus of the third chapter are two novels by Philip Roth, *Portnoy’s Complaint* and *Everyman* where shame is linked to the experience of becoming and being a man, evident in the portrayal of Roth’s characters’ bodies. Although, *Portnoy’s Complaint* deals with the sexual urges and desires of young Alex Portnoy
while *Everyman* features the aging body of the main protagonist, significantly the main protagonist's body in both novels appears an abject that indicates the feeling of shame and self-loathing. More specifically, Roth engages with the concept of Jewish softness, where the soft has to be rejected as shameful and potentially threatening the male identity for it provides an obstacle for the characters to achieve the American ideal of a hard male. This chapter demonstrates, that the body, which in Roth becomes the battle field between hardness and softness, becomes the pretext for Roth to investigate the conflict between hegemonic and diasporic masculinity, which he views as marginalized. In my analysis of Roth's representation of racialised masculinity, I draw upon James Penner’s analysis of literary masculinity in American-Jewish writers and his exploration of how their ethnicity informs their writing. My reading of the Jewish body draws on Susan Bordo’s “Reading of the Male Body”; her analysis of phallic symbolism in relation to racialised masculinity in particular, proves invaluable for the investigation of frequent images of the penis in Roth’s texts.

The fourth chapter explores three narratives of coming-of-age male characters, in *Raz. Dwa. Trzy* (2007), a novel by Hubert Klimko-Dobrzaniecki, who portrays shame and humiliation as inseparable parts of being and becoming a man. Shame appears within those male characters’ bodies in the form of mutation, dirt and disease, therefore, it is approached through the concepts of dirt and disgust. Also, as apparent from the reading of the novel, humiliation and violence become the way of testing the ‘real’ maleness, a practice, which is represented in the novel through a series of degrading acts such as beating, physical neglect or rape, which are inflicted upon the main protagonists and to which I refer as ‘socially manufactured shame’.
This section is informed by Mary Douglas' definition of dirt, which, as applied and investigated on those male bodies, reveals many social prohibitions and taboos. I demonstrate that the abjected bodies of the main protagonists reflect a general crisis of identity in Poland but, in particular, provide a critique of dominant patriarchal ideologies, predominantly heteronormativity, Catholicism and Communism. The research of Hanna Gosk, Agnieszka Mrozik and Ewa Mazierska, explain the ways in which those ideologies feature in literary narratives and representations of male characters. This chapter also explores the relationship and interdependence of the characters' private shame and collective shame in the novel represented by the place, Silesia, and historical era, which designate spaces where power was used to abuse and degrade others. The past is incorporated in the landscape of the novel, and I trace how it also becomes somatic, when the body becomes a repository of shame, resentment and contempt.
Literature Review

The fictional story of a soldier Rio, introduced at the beginning of this thesis, may be a somewhat doubtful proof that shame in men is perceived as shameful. Such a view, however, has been confirmed by academic research as well. Before introducing the relevant studies about shame and male gender specifically, I will focus briefly on the development of studies on shame in general. The most notable and influential of these works are Ruth Benedict’s *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* (1946), a comparative study of shame’s role in Japanese and American society; Silvan Tomkin’s affect theory developed in two volumes published at the beginning of the 1960s and Helen Merrell Lynd, *On Shame and the Search for Identity* (1958) which emphasizes how shame is linked to exposure and thus, points at the role of others, their expectations and internalized judgement, in the occurrence of the emotion. Last but not least, psychologist Helen Block Lewis in *Shame and Guilt in Neurosis* (1971), develops a theory of shame as a social emotion which occurs in people when they feel their bond with other people has been threatened. These works do not exhaust the list, yet, they continue to be a main point of reference in studies of shame across different disciplines. Elspeth Probyn’s approach to shame in *Blush*, for instance, has been developed by drawing on Helen Block Lewis’ approach to shame as a social emotion which expresses a fear of detachment, as well as Silvan Tomkins’s notion of ‘interest’; Probyn stresses shame is evoked by the lack of interest, such as when a person is being ignored, neglected and unloved.18

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18 In the “Introduction” to *Blush*, Probyn discusses this inspiration with Tomkin’s work: “From Tomkins I take the initially startling idea that interest and shame are intimately connected. (...) Only
Significantly, the emergence of the first studies on shame in fields such as anthropology, psychology and sociology coincided with the development of postcolonial studies that expose the often violent and humiliating practices of colonialisation. Coming to terms with the colonial past means coming to terms with the trauma, guilt and shame, not only of those victimized and subjugated to various regimes, but of the colonizer as well. As Sally Munt observes, behind dynamics of shame one finds "[h]istories of violent domination and occupation" and although, as she stresses, shame is directly aimed at the minoritised group, it "implicates the bestower" too (3). What could be viewed as the scholars' fascination with shame, or perhaps a greater awareness of it, in the second half of the twentieth century was most likely triggered by the knowledge of the crimes committed during the Second World War, such as the Holocaust, with which the Western world began to come to terms – and continues coming to terms with – in the immediate post-war period. The scale and horrific nature of those crimes could not be explained only in terms of guilt, often recalled with a reference to the coloniser's attitude, but required a deeper, long-lasting emotion which could express more accurately, what was viewed as a failing of humanity.¹⁹ The decades following WWII and developing postcolonial studies brought realization, while looking into the crimes of the war and colonial regimes – but also gradually emerging knowledge of the crimes by the Communist regimes – that shame is an emotion that can equally be a tool of social power, especially when it is used by the dominant groups to impose order, and an emotion something or someone that has interested you can produce a flush of shame" (ix). This, according to the scholar, explains why shaming does not always end in the feeling of shame. As Probyn continues shame reveals what are our aspirations and interest, or more precisely who a person wants to be and where he or she wants to belong.

¹⁹ In her monograph From Guilt to Shame: Auschwitz and After (2007), Ruth Leys attempts to grasp the significance of the replacement of post-war notions of guilt by shame.
that when felt by individuals, disempowers and paralyses them into passivity. Following the post-war period, the next decades brought many social revolutions, which echoed in approaches to shame as well. Mary Douglas (2002) describes the 1960s and 1970s as particularly radical decades which brought “every kind of subjection under scrutiny – the subordination of womankind, colonial arrogance, Western contempt for Orientals”. It was also a time when “commerce and war were shamed” and all forms of structure and control were exposed (Douglas xvii). In the preface to, 2002 Routledge Classics’ edition of, Purity and Danger, Douglas explains that due to the emergence of those emancipatory movements her book, dedicated to concepts of taboo and pollution as the mechanisms imposing social order, was unfashionable in the 1960s. Sally Munt (2008) proposes to understand contemporary social liberation movements since the 1960s in terms of the binary opposition model of pride and shame. In Queer Attachments she writes: “[w]hen you no longer care that you are being shamed, particularly when horizontal bonds formed through communities of shame can be transmuted into collective desires to claim a political presence and a legitimate self, that new sense of identity can forge ahead and gain rights and protection” (Munt 4). Munt gives examples of “Blacks, gays and women” as those particular communities emerging from shame into pride (4). Notably, Mary Douglas’ phrase, “the subordination of womankind”, refers to

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20 In The Event of Postcolonial Shame, Timothy Bewes, who provides the historical background of the growing interest in shame supports this view: “[shame] becomes the object of a more generalized awareness in the years after the Second World War and takes on further nuances at different moments, and in different locations, through the rest of the century. The historical factors that contribute to this awareness might be said to include, in roughly chronological order, the crisis in national consciousness that affected Europeans around the time of the First World War; the spectacular quality of the ideological posturing that took place on an international scale between the wars (in particular, between Germany and the Soviet Union); the revelations, after the Second World War and later, of the inhumane obscenities that had occurred in the name of those ideologies; the movements towards decolonization of the formerly colonized countries, particularly in the Caribbean, Asia, and Africa; the mass migrations across continents in the wake of those movements and the forced intimacy between different “cultures” that developed as a result” (Bewes 16).
women's experience under patriarchy. As some scholars observe, shame has been
used as one of the means of patriarchal control.\textsuperscript{21} As described by Douglas, rejection
of all forms of control in the 1960s naturally applies also to patriarchy targeted
mainly by the emerging in the West feminist critique of patriarchy; one of the
representative works regarding such criticism is for instance Kate Millet's \textit{Sexual
Politics}, published in 1970, in which she analyses the works of such writers as D. H.
Lawrence and Henry Miller, exposing sexist and misogynist portrayal of women,
which according to Millet is characteristic of patriarchal thinking (46). It could be
argued that feminism of the late 1960s and 1970s contributed greatly to the
development of studies of and about shame, by bringing into light the existing
imbalance of power between men and women, and pointing at how shaming of
women becomes the main politics of introducing the social order where men hold a
privileged position. In \textit{Scenes of Shame} (1999), a study of psychoanalysis, shame and
writing, Joseph Adamson and Hilary Clark write that shame has a powerful
disciplining role used to control women:

\begin{quote}
[s]evere shame and humiliated rage arise from continual subjection to
explicit forms of neglect and abuse, emotional, verbal, physical and sexual.

In particular, shame as the negative side of narcissism, the preoccupation
with the self as rejected by judging others, has traditionally shaped the
experience of women under patriarchy (22).
\end{quote}

A number of cultural and literary studies discuss various types of female shame, such
as racial and sexual shame or shame of the body. One of such examples is Brooks

\textsuperscript{21} More insight into this subject in Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick in \textit{Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy,
Performativity} (2003) and Sandra Lee Bartky \textit{Femininity and Domination: Studies in the
Bouson’s *Embodied Shame* (2009), which provides analysis of representative works by contemporary North American and British female novelists who deal with what Bouson calls ‘embodied shame’ – shame about the self and the female body, which arises from the trauma of defective and abusive parenting, or relationships, as well as from various forms of sexual, racial and social denigration of women. Bouson’s other study, *Quiet As It’s Kept*, published a year later, draws on psychoanalytical works on shame and studies of trauma to analyze the issues of race and shame among Afro-American characters in selected novels by Toni Morrison.

In *The Role of Shame in Symptom Formation* (1987), Helen Block Lewis highlights the link between the experience of shame and women’s experience under patriarchy suggesting that shame had been considered predominantly a female emotion evident, among others, from its neglect in social sciences, which until the mid-twentieth century, has been predominantly a male domain. This according to Lewis reflects prevailing “sexist thinking” (qtd.in Adamson and Clark 3). One of the fields in which shame has been neglected, because of its attachment to femininity, is psychoanalysis of the first half of the twentieth century, which was dominated by the works of Sigmund Freud. Freud considered shame to be “a feminine characteristic par excellence” and therefore, in his studies, he focused entirely on guilt. In his notes on femininity, Freud states: “we believe” that shame in women has as its purpose “concealment of genital deficiency”, where ‘we’, supposedly, represents the expertise of his entire research group (Freud 164). In other words, what Freud suggests, is that a woman’s deepest shame is her lack of a penis. However, feminist theory brought a critique of Freud’s writing exposed in its sexism and misogyny,
characteristic of the male dominated environment in which he worked. Helen Block Lewis' contribution in drawing psychoanalysts' attention to the aforementioned issues, most importantly, in evoking a great interest in this, previously ignored, emotion, is invaluable. In "A Homage to Helen Block Lewis", presented at the Shame Symposium in 2006, Sara Zarem remarked: "if Freud is the father of psychoanalysis and dynamics of guilt, Helen Block Lewis is the mid-wife of shame". Although Lewis' work was written from the perspective of a psychoanalyst, she repeatedly stressed how both, shame and guilt, are social emotions essential for humanity for they play an important role as social regulators. It is mainly this interdisciplinary approach to shame that made Lewis' theories appealing among scholars of different fields; for instance, in the cultural study of Elspeth Probyn or philosophical works of Michael Morgan and Bernard Williams. The next section introduces various definitions of shame, which highlight the particular qualities of shame as distinguished from guilt, as well as highlight how the sense of shame ultimately relies on others.

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23 It is worth mentioning here, that despite being a highly influential and prolific scholar, Helen Lewis does not seem appreciated enough in the scientific world considering the lack of books dedicated to her legacy, with many of Lewis' papers being still unpublished or thoroughly examined, such as "Shame, the supervisory process in patients' needs", discussed in the paper introduced above by Sara Zarem. Lewis, considered by Zarem a feminist, writes in 1987: "[o]ur sexist intellectual heritage contains an explicit devaluation of women and an implicit, insoluble demand that they accept their inferior place without shame. The neglect of shame in both psychiatry and in psychoanalysis reflects prevailing sexist thinking. In any case, shame in men of the Western civilized world is usually reserved only for Friday, Saturday or Sunday religious services. For women, it is their silent lot on these and all other days". Is it due to her comments about different social attitudes of male shame as comparing to female shame that causes Lewis' neglect?
‘In front of her I am ashamed’: shame, embarrassment and guilt

The title of this section refers to Hanif Kureishi’s protagonist Jay who admits to being ashamed in front of his partner. Definitions of shame introduced below reveal how shame ultimately relies on others: their expectations, their gaze and judgment, whereas the occurrence of shame reveals an aspiration to meet a certain ideal. Most definitions of shame indicate the somatic features of shame, such as the heat which is embodied in blushing, as well as the painful and unwanted nature of the emotion. Oxford English Dictionary defines shame as “the painful emotion arising from the consciousness of something dishonouring, ridiculous, or indecorous in one's own conduct or circumstances (or in those of others whose honour or disgrace one regards as one's own), or of being in a situation which offends one's sense of modesty or decency” (“shame”, def. 1). The definition of shame in the Dictionary of Polish Language (Słownik języka polskiego) describes shame, in Polish wstyd, as an “unpleasant feeling caused by the awareness of improper behaviour, use of inappropriate words etc., usually connected [the feeling] with the fear of losing face or good opinion in the eyes of others. It is a feeling of embarrassment.” (“wstyd”, def. 1). Both sources underline the painful, unpleasant and unwanted features of shame. The definitions stress the role of others in shame, indicating an awareness of, specific to a given context, codes of behaviour. Notably, in explaining shame the Oxford Dictionary refers to the notion of honour and modesty, which, as it will be explained later, are specific for the patriarchal context. While the Polish definition emphasises the individual perspective of shame expressed as “the fear of losing face”, the English definition suggests the similarity of shame to guilt, evident in the concern not to offend or disgrace others by transgressing the social norms. The
transgression of boundaries and prohibitions is characteristic in the occurrence of
guilt, which is different from shame expressing rather a failure to reach goals and
ideals. The phrase that captures the feeling of shame is ‘I am a failure’, ‘I am
inadequate’ whereas guilt is expressed by ‘I did wrong’: “a sense of guilt arises from
a feeling of wrongdoing, and sense of shame from a feeling of inferiority” concludes
Helen Lynd (22). Although various definitions underline the difference between the
two affects, shame and guilt often intertwine, especially when the committed
transgression destroys the image of oneself as worthy or moral, it could be easily
imagined that shame is equally evoked as guilt.

Shame is frequently equated with embarrassment, what could be observed
from the Polish definition of the word. Indeed, the two emotions have a number of
similar qualities and require knowledge of what is appropriate and inappropriate
behaviour in a given social and cultural context. Gershen Kaufman (1989), reflecting
on the meaning of the word ‘shame’ in English, observes that the current usage of
shame (from Old English *sceamu*), usually involves only one extremely narrow
meaning: a feeling of intense disgrace. In this usage, a clear distinction is made
between embarrassment and shame. Kaufman observes that embarrassment is a less

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24 This distinction between the two notions is embodied in the language. Lynd’s linguistic analysis of
the words shame and guilt brings her to a conclusion: “Guilt [in English] is centrally a transgression,
a crime, the violation of a specific taboo, boundary, or legal code by a definite voluntary act. (...)Shame is defined as a wound to one’s self-esteem, a painful feeling or sense of degradation excited by
the consciousness of having done something unworthy of one’s previous idea of one’s own
excellence. It is, also, a peculiarly painful feeling of being in a situation that incurs the scorn or
contempt of others” (23-24).

25 Different languages express a cultural treatment of embarrassment as a milder version of shame.
Most languages also have an everyday shame that is considered to belong to the shame/embarrassment
family. For example, the French *pudeur*, which can be translated as modesty, or a sense of shame, is
differentiated from *honte*, shame as a disgrace. In Spanish, the word *vergüenza* is used for both. Greek
distinguishes shame in the negative sense of ‘disgrace’ or ‘dishonour’ (*aiskhyne*) from shame in the
positive sense of ‘modesty’ or ‘bashfulness’ (*aidos*). Similarly, in Polish, the word *zawstydzić się* has
a positive connotation indicating modesty. In English, it can be translated as a kind of embarrassment.
The verb describes a transient feeling that is a reaction to a specific act, whereas *wstydzić się*, a word
deep and painful emotion than shame, which he conveys in a statement that
“embarrassment is speakable, shame is unspeakable” (Kaufmann 3). Kaufman sees
embarrassment as an emotional state that refers to an inappropriate act that is
witnessed by others, while shame may be experienced for an act, or a mere thought,
known only to oneself. Also, embarrassment carries the association of being caused
by an act that is socially unacceptable rather than immoral, however both emotions
accompany each other, particularly when an audience is involved. Philip Mollon
(2008) argues that we are all prone to shame and embarrassment, for wherever and
whenever people gather and interact there is potential for a shameful or embarrassing
situation, such as misunderstanding, failures of empathy or misperception.

Shame arises in the gaps and failures of human communication, in the
misconnection of expectation that one has of another. Every situation
of embarrassment is one involving disrupted expectations that one
person has of another. Embarrassment is an immediate shock reaction
experienced at the moment of disrupted presentation of self in a social
situation – shame is the close associate of embarrassment, but may be
more enduring, and sometimes lethal, pain arising from the memory of
the scene of embarrassment” (Mollon 24).

Being embarrassed is a transient feeling, often about something other than the self,
whereas shame is a semi-permanent state that encompasses the whole self and in
which the subject (the self) and the object of shame (a transgression) merge. “In

with the same stem wstyd- [n. shame], in English translates as ‘to be ashamed’, a semi-permanent
state. However, Polish has yet another phrase to describe the experience of being ashamed: wstyd mi,
which puts an emphasis on the subject experiencing shame in particular. Wstyd mi means ‘I am
ashamed’ (lit. it is shame to me), wstyd mu – ‘he is ashamed’ (it is shame to him), etc. The perception
of shame as a positive (modesty, bashfulness) or negative (disgrace, dishonour) state reflects a deeply
rooted attitude toward shame in different cultures.
shame we become the subject as well as the object of shame” argues Michael Lewis (1995) who stresses the paralysing effects of the emotions which “disrupts ongoing activity as the self focuses completely on itself”. The result, argues Lewis is confusion or even “inability to think clearly, inability to talk, and inability to act” (M. Lewis 34). As is clear from Lewis’ view, shame may disable the creative process and restrain overall performance whether in professional life or the private domain. These unpleasant symptoms are reasons why shame is often accompanied by fear. Juri Lotman considered fear and shame as primary mechanisms of culture (qtd. in Jędrzejko 69). Following Lotman’s approach, Elspeth Probyn writes in *Blush*: “[t]he idea that shame is often connected with fear is instructive. It recognizes the ways that shame and fear strike deep into our bodies” (47). Shame is, after all, connected with the fear of being embarrassed, humiliated or diminished, which are all forms of disgrace.

The introduced definitions of shame stress the awareness of social codes and expectations of others, or as Michael Morgan states in *On Shame* (2008) the knowledge of what kind of person we ought to be and what others expect from us “in terms of which our actions show us to have failed, to be deficient, to be diminished” to ourselves and to others (15). What those definitions also point towards is that shame relates to how other people view us; hence, it relates to gaze. In *Shame and Necessity* (1993), Bernard Williams writes that the basic experience connected to shame is that of “being seen, inappropriately, by the wrong people, in the wrong condition” (78). This does not necessarily mean that shame only occurs in the presence of other people. Shame does not need to involve an audience to witness one’s failure since others are always present in one’s mind through imagining how
one's defective self would appear to them: “it is important to note that (...) shame affect does not require the presence of another person to be activated” (Adamson and Clark 14).26 Jean Paul Sartre discusses this phenomenon in his philosophical work Being and Nothingness (1969), which examines the relationship between looking and shame. Sartre illustrates the feeling of shame by describing a picture of himself who, driven by curiosity or jealousy, peeps through a keyhole but all of a sudden hears footsteps in the hall, which he interprets as a revelation: “someone is looking at me!” (349). The feeling of shame results here from being given to another as an object, even when the other is only present in one's imagination, and in a somewhat unexpected exposure as well; thus, the element of surprise is also inherent in the experience of shame. It has to be stressed however that the exposure, even of the most private things, could not bring about shame unless one had felt within oneself disgust or shame about the exposed matters. One can hide from others but since shame is about the self, one cannot hide from oneself.

In Shame and Guilt in Neurosis (1971), Helen Block Lewis highlights how other people's gaze and judgement are the most significant factors in shame; more precisely, shame occurs as a result of internalised judgement of others. Lewis reflects that in her definition of shame as a bodily and/or psychological response to the threat to break a bond with others (Lewis 389). The very reason for the occurrence of shame in her view is fear of social disconnection, not being understood or respected. Lewis’ approach illuminates how shame relies on context and individual positioning. As a result, shame felt by one person may not be understood by others. Lewis also

26 Michael Morgan’s explanation of the nature of this exposure may be helpful: “shame is not only about being inadequate or being a failure; it is not only about being an unworthy person, a failed self. It is also about being an exposed failed self, one that appears to others who think poorly of it and from whom it wants to hide or flee” (49).
stresses that shame appears in response to threats to this bond from others, but can also occur with regard to ourselves, in an internal monologue in which we see ourselves from the point of view of others, which echoes Sartre's argument as well. She regards the disapproving gaze and judgement of the other imagined as superior, particularly powerful component of shame. This relationship with the other is further complicated by the system of social hierarchies which create social divisions and inequalities which, as internalised ideals, further impact on the sense of self-worth and our relationships with others. Predominantly, the ideologies of gender, class, and race can be indicated as primarily involved in marginalisation of certain social groups. According to psychologist Gershen Kaufman (1989), the groups that inevitably and more intensively experience shame on a social level are minorities, religious, racial or those defined in relation to gender or sexuality: "[f]or any minority group, negative identity is invariably rooted in scenes of shame. In American society, for example, the awareness of being African American, Native American, or Jewish calls inescapable attention to the self, exposing it directly to public view" (273). Belonging to a minority or marginalized group creates a conflict of identification since being a minority produces feelings of being different, often inferior to the conformity of the rest of society. The introduced pattern applies also to masculinity. Whereas certain models of masculinity gain the dominant position, others have to compensate for their inferior status. The next two sections discuss the ways shame conditions gender, the ideas of masculinity and femininity, and, on the other hand, how gender conditions shame.
‘Shame makes men wild’: shame and gender

One of the most distinctive literary works on shame is Salman Rushdie’s 1983 *Shame*, a novel which touches upon political upheavals in Pakistan in the 1970s, although according to the narrator, the country represented in the novel is “not Pakistan, or not quite” (19). *Shame* opens with a story of three Shakil sisters who “shamelessly”, as they themselves remark, celebrate his father’s death by organizing a ball (15). After the ball, it is revealed that one of the sisters became pregnant. In hiding their ‘shame’, which is a pregnancy of the unmarried woman, all three sisters simulate pregnancy so that way it is never revealed, which one of them is a mother of the soon born son, Omar. In this novel, which also inspires the next section’s discussion on shame and honour, Rushdie poses a thesis that shame and shamelessness are “roots of violence”; thus, shame, shamelessness and violence are inextricably bound in Rushdie’s view (116). Rushdie examines this thesis on the political and cultural level, referring to “East’s and West’s cultures of shame” but also in relation to gender (Hart 1).27 In *Shame*, one of Omar’s mothers describes gender differences in the manifestation of shame. When Omar asks his mother what does shame feel like, Chhunni replies: “it makes women feel like to cry and die... but men, it makes them go wild” (Rushdie 39). This section introduces various studies from fields of sociology, psychology and cultural studies that shed light on the ways in which shame, as well as other emotions such as fear, anger or violence, are manifested differently in men and women due to distinct social roles for each sex,

27 Rushdie describes political and personal strife of Pakistani leaders and their families but also introduces a number of violent historical circumstances such as the murder of a daughter by her father, a Pakistani émigré in London. David W. Hart expands on the East-West axis in which shame is analyzed in Rushdie’s novel by suggesting that Rushdie encourages his Western audience to “view with a more critical eye both the absurdities of life in Pakistan as well as absurdities of our Western views of Pakistan” (1). As Hart remarks, the postcolonial perspective can deeper our understanding of the persisting dependencies between colonizer’s ‘gaze’ and the way Pakistan constructs itself in its own eyes.
and as a result, distinct expectations of masculinity and femininity. The manifestation of the affect in men and women may be considered the product of learned gendered gestures, or as Judith Butler proposes, gender performance, that enhance the ideals of either manliness or womanliness in the given culture.\textsuperscript{28} It is not that shame is informed by the politics of gender alone; the politics of shame is shaped by religious, national and cultural ideologies as well.

Although the single studies on male shame are hard to find, with the insights on male shame usually being placed in a larger discussion on either shame or masculinity, a few scholars touch upon the issues of shame in men. As pointed out by Thomas Scheff (2006) in the “Introduction” to this thesis, men are less likely to acknowledge shame than women because most of them learn from early childhood that emotions are considered unmanly. James Gilligan takes this argument even further, pointing out that most boys are encouraged to behave violently.

When the individual has been socialized into the male gender role that, in our patriarchal culture [he refers to US society], means he has been taught that there are many circumstances and situations in which one has to be violent in order to maintain one’s masculinity or sense of masculine sexual identity and adequacy, and in which a nonviolent man would be seen as impotent and emasculated, a coward, wimp, eunuch, boy, homosexual, or woman, a man who has “no balls” (Gilligan 1166).

\textsuperscript{28} Judith Butler’s notion of gender performativity is most explicitly expressed in \textit{Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity}, first published in 1990. Here, Butler famously stresses how the acts, gestures considered womanly or manly are performative, to which she further refers as “fabrications” (Butler 185).
In Gilligan's view, the society requires strength from men while the failure to demonstrate it, stigmatizes them as a 'woman' or a 'homosexual'. The sociologist calls violence an emotion of shame and humiliation and stresses that most violent acts are likely to be caused by these two emotions (1155). Gilligan's claim can be observed in the social politics which honours male violence evident, for instance, in awarding medals of honour in wartime but shaming soldiers who are deemed cowardly by putting them on trial, as was also illustrated in Kolakowski's story about Rio. Although such practices are most prominent in military service, where particularly male bravery is emphasized and praised, they spread to other domains of life, determining not only male mentality and attitudes, but also female ideals of masculinity. These patterns of masculinity in women, impact further on the ways in which mothers raise their sons and they shape women's sexual desires and the imagery of the male eros.

Literature offers examples where women shame the non-violent and passive behaviours of their sons and partners, expecting them to take action, to be 'a real man'. Lady Macbeth directs such words at her husband, "Are you a man?" (Act III, scene IV), which is not simply a question but a demand of a proof or a demonstration of strength and power. Although one may argue the works of fiction are not always reliable in their representations of reality, curiously, psychologists such as Helen Merrel Lynd or Andrew Morrison in The Culture of Shame (1998), draw heavily on the literary examples in their analysis and interpretation of shame in their patients. Morrison points at Shakespeare's works which are "replete with shame", in particular in application to men's bravery, honour and preoccupation of being manly (5). In a more contemporary work, that is Christos Tsiolkas' novel, The Slap (2008),
the narrator describes a wife's reaction to her husband's emotional outburst: "[s]he did not want him to be the despairing, vulnerable creature, he had revealed himself to be" (405); "[s]he did not want to minister to his grief, his self-pity and to his sense of failure. (...) [she thought] be a man, deal with your fucking mid-life crisis" (406).

Even though primarily shame is not a male or female emotion, it is expected men and women should react differently to shame with male shame developing into active, occasionally aggressive reactions, but showing a tendency towards self-related passivity in women (Lewis 1995; Marks 2007). The literary examples introduced above, supported by psychological research, demonstrate that the external manifestation of emotions greatly depends on gender imagery and its symbolism in the cultural psyche.

This is apparent in the aforementioned cases of male violence that has been embodied in many forms of cultural and social activity. In her reading of the male body, Susan Bordo (1994) ties violence with shame to demonstrate further how both emotions are about power. According to Bordo, the practice of violence as male empowerment is most evident in heterosexual pornography, where men appear to have absolute control over women and appear to humiliate them. Bordo argues that although those images evoke revulsion and despair about the degrading and disempowering images of women, she puts these feelings aside to explore, what she perceives as, a "felt powerlessness at the heart of the psychology of male-porn consumption" (Bordo 274). This felt powerlessness, explains Bordo, lies in a deeply

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29 The Slap is set in an urban and multicultural environment of Melbourne. The act of slapping a child at the barbecue which brought together a group of friends, unravels a complex relationship and emotional engagements between the group members. Tsiolkas touches upon feelings of resentment and contempt related to material status, class and ethnic positioning and how they affect personal relationships. He is also exposing the persistence of gender stereotypes; patterns of behaviours described as manly or womanly.
rooted belief that women are in control of male sexuality and thus manhood itself, for women have the power to arouse a man’s desire and then to reject that desire, leaving the man humiliated, shamed, frustrated or enraged. Moreover, unlike reality, pornography creates ‘a fantasy land’ in which male desire and fantasies are always welcomed and the male body, no matter what it looks like and how it performs, is never rejected. Bordo expands on that:

[p]ornography thus becomes a context in which the repressed penis, haunted by old guilt and embarrassment about secret masturbation, wet dreams, unwanted erections and ejaculations, taught that what spurts out of the body is disgusting, can come out of hiding and exhibit itself without shame or fear or rejection. (...) the transformation of the embarrassed penis into proud phallus – is the point of the pornography (Bordo 275).

From this point of view, pornographic images do not simply express a male need to degrade and dominate; it is a zone of unconditional acceptance, purged from rejection and shame. The male need for unconditional acceptance is a universal human need, reminds Bordo. Any form of rejection causes a feeling of being inappropriate and is a source of shame. Literature responds to this desire to be “unconditionally adored”, testifying, just as in Bordo’s example of pornography, that men experience great shame when rejected (275).

Different manifestations of shame in men and women are discussed by the philosopher, Ullaliina Lehtinen in her 1998 article “How Does One Know What Shame Is?”, which explores the experience of shame in women, in particular. Lehtinen states that there are gender-specific ways of understanding and knowing the
The philosopher "women feel an inner shame and that men feel it as outer", which means that men may feel shame in a less penetrating way (qtd. in Probyn 2005, 83). The statement that men feel shame in a less penetrating way can easily be refuted on the basis that, as it was argued, the way shame is manifested in men and women, depends on the cultural politics of shame concerning gender. As pointed by Victor Sadler (2006) the boys are being socialized into suppressing emotions and hence, they are less likely to acknowledge their emotions. As was evident, among others, from the introduced literary examples, men are expected to take action and have control rather than let the emotions take over the situation. Such an approach provokes various masking strategies in men, in particular regarding those emotions considered vulnerable, such as shame. Since men tend to hide or mask their shame in fear of being seen as unmanly, can the real scale of shame felt by men ever be discerned? Lehtinen's approach is nevertheless useful as an example of how shame genderization has been perpetuated in academic research on the subject, apparent in Lehtinen's statement that women internalize shame, where it becomes manifested as psychosomatic reactions, while men are believed to enact their shame and mask it by various actions in order to eradicate it. Lehtinen's observations then confirm that the existing difference in shame expression in men and women are a part of 'fabricated' gendered gestures, which further sustain the division between the two genders.

Lehtinen's argument that shame is somatic solely in women can easily be challenged while looking at the male characters in the novels analysed in this study. It is worth noting at this point, that although Rushdie's character Chhunni, similarly to the argument presented by Lehtinen, claims that shame makes women to feel like
to cry but it makes men to go wild, her sister makes quite a different remark stating
that “sometimes it happens the other way around” (39). Shame appears somatic in
*Intimacy* with Kureishi’s character admitting to feeling his body “contract and
shrink” under the gaze of his partner, in front of whom he feels ashamed (*Intimacy*
8). The character in *Raz. Dwa. Trzy*, describes the feeling of being ashamed of his
enlarged breast as a sensation of “burning” in his chest, referring to the agonizing
feeling of shame as “I think I’m dying” (159). Similarly, Roth’s characters express
the bodily nature of shame, not only when the emotion becomes somatic but also
when the body itself becomes a source of shame. These two are not such distinct
qualities since the internalized ideals of beauty, fitness or erotic body, are applied to
our bodies through imagining how others would judge us.30 Hence, the shame about
one’s own body does not always occur as a result of a real situation when others are
looking and judging. This shame about the body can nevertheless become ‘global’,
meaning applied to the whole self. Rushdie’s claim that shame is a “psychosomatic
event”, expresses precisely the two way effect of shame, as an equally internal and
external emotion (123). Roth’s character Portnoy speaks of this quality of shame
when he describes his body as “highways of shame”, thus giving a constant
opportunity for shame and, on the other hand, he talks about external sources of
shame; shame being everywhere he turns to (*Portnoy’s Complaint* 124). Finally, the
protagonist of *Everyman* refers to embarrassment felt at what has become of him in
the process of aging. He describes a sense of “estrangement brought on by his bodily
failings”, where the ‘estrangement’ refers to gradually becoming detached from his
life style and activities, which expressed his virility (79).

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30 Gilbert discusses how people’s experience of their physical bodies as in some way unattractive,
undesirable and a source of ‘shamed self’ put them at risk of “psychological distress and disorders”
(Gilbert 3).
The body itself can become a source of shame such as disfigurement, illness, obesity, aging or simply when it does not live up to a certain idea in such cases often leading to body dysmorphism and eating disorders. As Sally Munt (2008) puts it, shame becomes embodied “and the body begins to speak for itself” (Munt 2). Introduced previously study of embodied shame by Bouson (2009) illustrates both instances: the body that is a source of shame and the body as a place of projection of shame that is about something else. It is important to stress that distinction. In some of the cases Bouson talks about the body itself being the source of shame; obesity, unattractiveness or any kind of body disfigurement might be the direct source of shame, since those characteristics are difficult to hide. Yet, when she talks about anorexia and women feeling unattractive, this seems to be a different matter. In Body Shame (2002), Paul Gilbert remarks that when people experience their physical bodies as in some way unattractive, undesirable and a source of ‘shamed self’ they are “at risk of psychological distress and disorders” (Gilbert 3). Yet, can the situation be reversed? Can psychological discomfort be projected onto the body? When there is nothing wrong with the body, can the sense of inferiority and worthlessness and alienation cause self-hatred of one’s whole existence, of which the body is an inseparable part? Bouson implies that women are suffering for the consumerist culture subjects them to perfection by employing the ‘pedagogy of defect’, where any apostasy from the ideal makes women ashamed; the critic presents women and their bodies as passive victims of cultural norms without a clear indication however, of the mechanisms that cause the feeling of shame at body imperfections. As the next sections reveal, the female body, as well as the male body, has been conditioned by a number of disciplining practices, where shaming features as one of the practices to impose particular norms of behaviour.
"Man's honour is in his woman": shame in a patriarchal context

Rushdie’s interpretation of shame, links it directly to Pakistan and its predominantly patriarchal culture; however, the novel’s Pakistan could be seen as representing patriarchal culture more generally since Rushdie remarks: “[t]he country in this story is not Pakistan or not quite” (29). Indeed, the magic-realist style of the novel blurs the boundaries between realism and a fairy tale and thus, Pakistan in the novel may be viewed as a “magical-real place” (Hart 1). However, it seems that such narrative technique predominantly allows Rushdie to provide a more universal critique of colonial and patriarchal mechanisms of oppression, in which shame plays a central role. It is important to acknowledge that the patriarchal cultures vary between each other, mainly with regard to the extent of power men exercise over women and also in the level of men’s privilege facilitated by a system of institutions. Nevertheless, certain parallels can be drawn between different patriarchal contexts with regard to shame. In Pakistan presented by Rushdie in the novel, shame stands for a synonym of a woman embodied in one of the main protagonists Sufiya Zinobia, who was born a girl whereas her father expected a boy. “Being born as a girl in a society which values boys is a shame” argues Roshin George (2006), in his notes on Rushdie’s novel, recalling words of Sufiya’s own mother who refers to her daughter as “my shame” (George 133). As evident in the remark made by one of the male protagonists in the novel, ‘woman’ is a disgraced word: “Woman (...) what a term! Is there no end to the burdens this word is capable of bearing? Was there ever such a broad-backed and also such a dirty word?” (Rushdie 62). Why ‘woman’ is a ‘dirty’ word becomes apparent when looking at the structure of male shame, which, in cultures such as Pakistan has been defined in terms of honour. Significantly, one of Shame’s
protagonists observes that a “man’s honour is in his woman”, emphasizing women’s appropriate conduct as essential for a man to maintain his respect in the eyes of others (103). In order to regain his honour, a man has to fight and, if necessary, to kill. When shamed, men ‘go wild’, using the expression of Rushdie’s character, where ‘wildness’ indicates the feeling of shame in men but it also entitles men to be violent. In the reality portrayed in Shame, the loss of honour in men results in violence, known as ‘honour killing’; that is, killing of a woman, who, as the perpetrator believes, has brought dishonour upon the family. The explanation of male honour as strongly relying on women’s behaviour proves very helpful in discovering the real reason behind women being punished. Clare Pajaczkowska and Ivan Ward argue in Shame and Sexuality (2008) that the real reason for the killing is not the women’s perceived misconduct but men’s shame felt before others:

One might speculate that, whatever the role of cultural obligations and tradition, it is the shame of other men seeing the perpetrator unable to control ‘his’ women which motivates such action. The shame, in other words, of being seen as impotent and emasculated (Pajaczkowska and Ward 9).

From the above explanation, it becomes clear the purpose of the killing is aimed not at punishing the shameless women but at averting the shame felt by men.

Since in patriarchal cultures male shame relates directly to female shame, it is important to shed some light on the symbolism of distinct cultural representations of male and female shame. In Honor and Shame and the Unity of the Mediterranean (1987), an investigation of manhood in a different patriarchal context, David Gilmore observes that since a great part of male honour depends on women’s conduct,
patriarchal cultures invest great efforts in control of the female body and her behaviour. Shaming practices are one of the ways to discipline women and appoint what behaviours are appropriate for them (Gilmore 4). Shame in women, in the patriarchal context, has at least two dimensions: on the one hand, shame understood as purity and chastity is considered a virtue. According to Gilmore, for a woman, being modest and bashful translates as hiding her sexual needs in the pursuit of good reputation, achieved primarily by hiding the body from view of others and keeping it pure; the most extreme form of that practice is embodied in the hijab used by women to cover their body. On the other hand, the behaviour suggesting woman’s promiscuity indicates another kind of shame; namely, a disgrace that she brings onto others related to her, while her body becomes a synecdoche of that shame. In “The Shame of Being a Man”, Steven Connor observes that female shame has mostly been disciplinary:

(...) in the shame attaching to menstruation and pregnancy and illegitimate birth and excessive or unfeminine behaviour (drunkenness, ribaldry, lewdness, loose talk), shaming has worked to keep females in bounds, docile, infant, obedient (Connor 219).

Aforementioned social practices of appointing certain female behaviours and features as shameful reinforce patriarchal dominance and support women’s exclusion from many domains of public life.31 ‘Shameless’ women are viewed as a threat to the

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31 One of such stigmatized behaviours in women is sexual activity outside the marital relationship, in many cultures marked as manifestation of women’s shamelessness. In a scene of Chłopi [Peasants] (1909), the novel by Polish Nobel laureate Władysław Reymont, a woman, Jagna, is thrown out of her home by her husband for having various affairs. She is also condemned by the villagers, who remove her from the village on a wheelbarrow full of manure. In this symbolic scene, a woman’s sexuality, dirt and moral transgression are bound together as shameful and disgraceful to the whole community. Although the novel represents society at the end of the nineteenth century the perception of female sexuality as shameful deeply affects women across the cultures today. This is often manifested in
patriarchal order for they are beyond the concept of moral conduct and men or other women, such as mothers who follow the same order, can no longer maintain control over them; hence, shame and shaming politics in patriarchal societies should be seen primarily as a method of maintaining power over women. While women are made to believe they disgrace themselves and others through what is perceived as shameless behaviour, men’s sexual conquests secure their image as powerful and dominating.

In her sharp comment Carol Delaney (1987) concludes that female genitalia, as opposed to male “are not the source of pride but the token of her shame” (42). In this comment, Delaney suggests that genitalia become a synecdoche of sexuality and that a different approach is taken with regard to male and female sexuality. The next paragraph expands on Delaney’s findings in the sense that it illustrates a representation of male and female shame as related to body and sexuality.

In many world cultures, nakedness, sexual desires and sexuality in general, are considered shameful subjects and taboo, however shame around sexuality and the body has traditionally been attached to the female body, with religion playing a major part in this process. A reading of the painting by an Italian artist Masaccio (born in 1401 as Tommaso di Ser Giovanni di Simone) *Expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden* (1425), provides an artistic example of the traditional representation of female and male shame for Western cultures as well as the embodiment of Christian politics of shame (see appendix 1).32 In “Gender and Shame in Masaccio’s Expulsion from the Garden of Eden”, a reading of Masaccio’s work by women’s repression of their sexuality, self-hatred and dissatisfaction with their bodies, examined, among others, by Brooks Bouson in *Embodied Shame* (2009).

32 The painting presents the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the biblical Eden and the expression of shame felt at their deed. Adam manifests the emotion in a gesture of hiding his face in hands whereas Eve covers her breasts and her genitalia. Until the 17th century, when the fig leaves had been successively composed by the church authorities to conceal the couple’s intimate parts, Adam’s genitalia depicted with anatomical precision were shown on the painting.
James Clifton, the critic explains that Adam’s shame depicted as the covered face evokes associations with the mind and rationality; the head and face, superior to the other parts of his body, are its symbols. Eve’s position draws attention to the intimate parts of her body, pointing to physicality and sexuality, which became the symbolic representation of shame in women (Clifton 642). By depicting the couple in a way that ascribes reason and spirituality to the man, leaving the woman to the realm of the body, which in the Western imagination symbolises shamelessness, temptation and the source of sin, Masaccio underlines traditional gender differentiation in Christian cultures. The painting reflects also a certain politics of gaze embodied in the man’s averted gaze and woman’s covered body: significantly, at the moment of shaming, it is the man who sees himself as seeing and the woman sees herself as being seen, which is manifested by their gestures. It can be concluded that Masaccio’s work depicts certain codes of expressing female and male shame imposed by Catholic Church’s politics of gender and morality, which then had an impact on other, non-religious forms of cultural representation.

Looking at the European works of literature, it becomes apparent that the patterns of representing male and female shame, described above, still prevailed at the beginning of the 20th century. In Issues of Shame and Guilt in the Modern Novel (2009), David Tenenbaum discusses the works of writers including Conrad, Kafka, Camus, Wilde and Proust, tracing the changes in literary descriptions of remorse fostered by modernist literature’s response to normative ethical standards. The characters’ sense of having obligations to serve for society’s good and being moral clashes with their inappropriate desires and impulses, such as for instance anti-heroic behaviour in Lord Jim, homosexual desires expressed in Ulysses and Dorian Gray or
existential guilt in Kafka and Camus. Tenenbaum’s descriptions of shame and guilt are closely related to the cultural and religious morals of the time, with 18th century philosophy, especially that of Hume’s theory of the innate sense of social responsibility, evidently influencing the cultural politics of identity in many European societies. Tenenbaum’s analysis shows that, at the beginning of the twentieth century in Europe, the notion of honour appoints what is considered appropriate, i.e. moral, behaviour in men. In Oscar Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1994), Hallward directs such words to Dorian: “Every gentleman is interested in his good name ...One has a right to judge of a man by the effects he has over his friends. Yours seem to lose all sense of honour” (174). Also, it can be observed that Dorian values the young actress, Sibyl Vane, an object of his passion, by measures of a middle-class English gentleman, emphasizing her innocence and shyness. He describes his first offstage encounter with Sibyl in the words, “Sibyl? Oh, she was so shy, so gentle” (65). These and other literary examples suggest that in patriarchal cultures having shame indicates an appropriate behaviour in women for the qualities such as shyness, modesty and bashfulness are a required norm of a ‘respectful’ woman. The quality mostly associated with men with this regard is honour.

In the novels written during and after the 1990s, Philip Roth, Hanif Kureishi and Hubert Klimko-Dobrzaniecki introduce the patriarchal context mainly as the conflict between fathers and sons. In *Intimacy*, patriarchal values are apparent in Jay’s father described by Jay as a man who was there “to impose himself” and to “exert discipline”, a practice, which does not apply to the British society of the 1990s, at least not outwardly (*Intimacy* 115). A kind of nostalgia for the times when women and children were subjugated to their husbands and fathers is expressed by
Roth’s protagonists in *Everyman* and *Portnoy’s Complaint*. In her anthropological research on shame and honour, Aleksandra Granada (2006) stresses that the traditional patterns of gender are deeply rooted in culture and are still actively influencing male behaviour and the idea, in men and women alike, of what it means to be ‘a real man’ (210). At the same time, the characters frequently comment on achievements of feminism and the strengthening position of women in public life. The writers of the studied novels have been criticised for their portrayal of women considered sexist and misogynistic. Indeed, the writers engage with sexual and violent scenes, reproducing and, at times, exaggerating the hetero-normative narratives where men prove their manliness through sexual encounters and conquest of women. In one of the reviews of *Raz. Dwa. Trzy*, we read “sex seems compensation for all their [characters] failed life” (Wolny-Hamkało 2007 “Raz.Dwa.Trzy”). It is important to stress nevertheless, women emerge as powerful in those texts since without them the characters feellost and lonely; women are in power to expose men’s failures. A part of the reason why some men view women negatively or, indeed manifest hatred of women, is blaming feminism, identified solely with women, for men’s failures. The next section discusses the ways in which achievements of feminism, particularly the growing presence of women in professional life and the exposure of the oppressiveness of patriarchy, result in a backlash against it.

**Shamed by feminism**

In modern societies that have been implementing the ideas of gender equality, and where the notion of honour has lost its traditional value, shame in relation to
masculinity gains new dimensions that are worth a closer analysis. Most notably, in Roth's and Kureishi's works the protagonists reflect on social changes brought about by feminism, in particular the growing position of women and their independence from men. Although the impact of feminist ideology was delayed under the communist system in Poland, post-1989 literature reflects those changes, most notably, in the construction of the powerful female characters that also are apparent in Klimko-Dobrzaniecki's 2007 novel. During the last decades of the twentieth century, Western cultures and societies underwent huge transformations with regard to politics of gender and sexuality, following the economic and political changes of the 1960s in the United States and the 1980s in the United Kingdom, in particular. These resulted in the emergence of consumerist societies, transforming the role and expectations of what does it mean to be 'a man'. In Masculinities and Culture (2002), John Beynon explains how economic and social changes destroyed the patterns of employment replacing the work place and class-based hierarchy of masculinities with the ones based on style and fashion: "what emerged was a hierarchy of masculinities based on appearance and which abolished more traditional masculine divisions" (106). In addition, the 1950's US pop culture contributed to the gradual commercialisation of the male body with the surfacing of men "dressed to be looked at and admired", the ideals which slowly soaked into European cultures (Beynon 102). Media, style magazines for men and advertisements with its emphasis on promotion, transformed the politics of looking at the male body as well as men's attitude toward their own corporeality.\footnote{It is worth introducing Hanif Kureishi's comment on the contemporary politics of corporeality in the British context. When discussing his collaboration with French director Patrice Chereau, who made a cinematic adaptation of Kureishi's novel into a film Intimacy (2001), Kureishi comments on contemporary Britain: "if Britain seems pleasantly hedonistic and politically torpid, it might be...}
In “Corporeal Archetypes and Power” Katherine Sheets-Johnson (1992) observes that within Western cultural practice a male body is never made an object of study in the same way as female body. The scholar continues:

[...] the net result is that the penis is never made public, never put on the measuring line in the same way that female sexual body parts are put on the measuring line. On the contrary, a penis remains shrouded in mystery. It is protected, hidden from sight. What is normally no more than a swag of flesh in this way gains unassailable stature and power (...) (Sheets-Johnstone 69).

This new focus on the body described by Beynon has consequences for the way male sexuality is expressed; more precisely how sexuality becomes secured through sexual performance. Since heterosexuality is the dominant model of sexuality in many cultures there is a great pressure on men to pursue women as an essential way of being and becoming a man. This leads to the perception of sexual potency purely in terms of phallic potency and results in the perception of the penis as ‘a tool’ detached from its owner and his feelings. Why this equation may be problematic for men is explained by Susan Bordo (1994) who stresses that the penis is not the phallus. While the later has “a unified social identity” and a “constancy of form”, the former is “far from maintaining a steady will and purpose, it is mercurial, temperamental, unpredictable”. The penis, the most powerful symbol of manliness, has, in Bordo’s description, the qualities traditionally considered female characteristics. The penis because politics has moved inside, into the body. The politics of personal relationship, of private need, of gender, marriage, sexuality, the place of children, have replaced that of society, which seems uncontrollable” (Kureishi 2002, 228). This statement was incorporated into a literary project, a short story “The Body”, a story of Adam, who ‘replaces’ his body with a younger one. The story appears a pretext to discussion on the condition of modern men, women, family and relationships. Kureishi’s conclusion seems to be that identity is reduced to merely the body that is for sale.
appears to be impulsive, “the most visibly mutable of bodily parts”, hence the least controllable of the male body parts (Bordo 266). The penis, as described by Bordo, provides constant opportunity for shame because it can expose a man’s lack of control over it such as in the failure to have an erection, a potentially humiliating and emasculating experience.

Since, according to Freud, the lack of a penis signifies shame, the contrary, its possession, should be a source of pride in men and increase their willingness to expose it. Yet, the fact that the male body has been rather concealed from public discourse, as noted by Sheets-Johnstone’s comment, proves something quite opposite: a great concern of men to not expose their penises. In a similar mode, Bordo showed that male nudity, an uncovered penis in particular, can be viewed as a source of shame for men. Taking into consideration those insights, it can be concluded that the male body is marked by the constant possibility of shame, the possibility of revealing that one does not have complete control over it. Reading the works of Hanif Kureishi, Hubert Klimko-Dobrzaniecki and Philip Roth, all considered in this research, reveals that men are concerned with their bodies no less than women. A close-reading of Raz. Dwa. Trzy, Intimacy and Everyman reveals that a significant part of those characters’ male power lies in their bodies, of which the penis constitutes the centre. The penis, as representing power and virility, sustains a close relation to the characters’ sense of manliness. Hence, when their desires (or arousal) are, for whatever reason, rejected they experience humiliation since they are viewed as failing to demonstrate their (sexual) potency.

In this new culture of appearances, the notion of honour was substituted by the category of achievement. In Manhood in the Making: Cultural Concepts of
Masculinity (1990), David Gilmore observes that today real manhood is “a precarious or artificial state that boys must win against powerful odds” and that true manhood needs “a dramatic proof” (11). It is an ideal to which men and boys aspire and that “their culture demands of them as a measure of belonging” (Gilmore 17). Although this quality is highly marked in Mediterranean-area cultures on which Gilmore focuses, true manhood in other cultures frequently shows an inner insecurity and has to be confirmed by various performances and rites. According to Gilmore, those who do not accomplish the ideal are made to believe that they failed, which undermines their social esteem. These new demands of manhood put a constant pressure on men to perform ‘manly’, in other words, to exaggerate the qualities traditionally associated with masculine domination, such as exhibition of power, bravery and authority. The author of Manhood in the Making demonstrates the presence of such practices in American culture which enhance the heroic image of achieved manhood. This is apparent for instance in Hollywood films such as Westerns, Italian-American gangster films featuring strong and forceful types of male characters, Rambo-like imageries, which also appear in computer games. The emergence of various forms of hard masculinity can be viewed as a response to feminism, which makes men anxious about their weakening position within the gender order.

Women’s movements of the 1960s and 1970s, emerged as a part of other movements and discourses, described by Mary Douglas (2002) as attacking the systems that demonstrated readiness to “marginalise and condemn” (xvii). The feminist activism of the time, referred to as Second Wave feminism as well, brought a critique of patriarchal systems exposing men’s advantageous position in many
spheres of social life (xvii). This resulted in a new critique of traditional forms of masculinity and the promotion of a ‘New Man’ expected to actively participate in domestic life as a father, husband and a partner, sharing the responsibility of raising kids and running the household. Nevertheless, the traditional, or more precisely, patriarchal patterns of gender are deeply rooted in culture and are still actively influencing male behaviour and the idea of what it means to be a ‘real’ man, in both, men and women. Therefore, in the second half of the twentieth century, being a man appears as a constant negotiation between masculinity associated with patriarchy and its pursuit of dominance, thus hard masculinity and masculinity which is characterized by abandonment of the tendencies to dominate over others associated with softness in the cultural psyche. In “traditional masculine subject” these new social demands result in a state, which Thomas Byers (1995) describes in his article “Terminating the Postmodern: Masculinity and Pomophobia” as “a profound existential panic or ... despair” (7). Byers comment refers to what has been commonly referred to as ‘masculinity crisis’, which is best described as men’s anxiety and uncertainty about their changing position without gender order.

Byers’ reference to the traditional masculinity, suggests the ‘crisis’ refers to hegemonic versions of masculinity, a view highlighted also by Reawyn Connell in her study of social construction of masculinity, *Masculinities*. Connell argues that the idea that masculinity is in crisis emerges as a reaction to the interrogation of, specifically, the hegemonic conception of masculinity which refers to a certain form

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34 The emergence of women’s consciousness marked as Second Wave Feminism relates predominantly to Northern American context, with Betty Friedan’s *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), perceived as provoking the rise of women’s social activism. However, as Becky Thompson observes this version of the origins of the Second Wave is “not sufficient in telling the story of multiracial feminism” also emerging at the time and which had to deal with a different kind of oppressions, such as racism for instance (57). For more discussion see Thompson’s “Multiracial Feminism: Recasting the Chronology of Second Wave Feminism” in *Feminist Theory Reader. Local and Global Perspectives* (2013).
of masculinity that is "culturally exalted", honoured, glorified and is granted the position of leadership (Connell 77). In any culture, hegemonic masculinity is the idealized form of masculinity to which other types of masculinity are subordinated and which provides the basis for the relationship among men. One of the aims of the feminist critique is to question the hegemonic powers and introduced by them hierarchies, which result in inequalities, not only between men and women but also within male gender; as Connell observes there is "gender politics within masculinity" (37). This politics is evident in the novels analysed in the following chapters, where the characters' attempt to measure up to the ideal of masculinity constructed as dominant in their respective cultures and where a failure to live up to this ideal results in shame.

In *Posting the Male* (2003), Daniel Lea and Berthold Schoene discuss the phenomenon of crisis in relation to contemporary British masculinity however using the word 'crisis' with a reservation. The perceived 'crisis' of masculinity, observe Lea and Schoene, results from the split of values, traditional and postmodern:

(...) the ‘crisis’ of contemporary masculinity could be said to derive from men’s exposure to two antagonistic sets of imperatives and ideals – one patriarchal, the other feminist or post-patriarchal – resulting in a behavioural and self-constitutive quandary that is experienced as stressful because it appears so utterly irresolvable (12).

In the past, merely the fact of being born male secured a certain social authority and power, especially over women. One could lose honour but one still would be a man; a man without honour, to be precise. As Lea and Schoene observe patriarchy insists on “gender purity” and thus patriarchal masculinity must “abject the feminine”. The
ideas of feminism, however, may blur these traditional gender boundaries by endorsing for instance “female masculinity” or “male femininity” (12). As the critics emphasize, these new approaches to gender may not be easy for some to embrace and may result in confusion:

It is perhaps not so easy to embrace ambiguity, find freedom in indeterminacy, and embark on a thorough reinvention of oneself as long as coercive patriarchal values are still in operation. After all, from a patriarchal perspective ambiguity, indeterminacy and incompleteness are indicative not of empowerment and liberation but of failure and castration (Lea and Schoene 12).

As a result, this clash of ideals leads to the creation of a ‘new man’, which as Byers argues, is a slightly reconstructed hegemonic man, which combines “a certain apparent accommodation of feminism with a deep-seated misogyny” (7).

The new conditions of masculinity may result in the perception of feminism as undermining men’s position in society. Elspeth Probyn (2005) takes this argument even further, stating that feminism can be a source of shame in men. Probyn explains that although “feminism has put forward ideals that often inspire the best in people” at the same time, it is also easy to fall short of those ideals, as was also stressed by Lea and Schoene (Probyn 76). One of the examples of such negative responses to feminism is the work of the social activist Robert Bly, *Iron John: A Book about Men* (1990), which promotes the idea that men have been emasculated by feminism and by general culture, which has become effeminate. Bly proclaims the need of the return of the Old Man, the Deep Male, which does not engage in such humiliating activities as washing up and changing diapers, which weaken men’s mythic power.
Bly’s work represents a form of backlash against feminism. In *Blush*, Probyn analyses one of the backlash websites, (www.backlash.com), stating that the occurrence of the backlash movement is a response to the “excess of feminism”, which is perceived as the reason for male trouble (80). To support her argument, Probyn introduces a post by Wade Balder, who, on the mentioned website, touches upon the potentially shaming for men quality of feminism:

> While most of us shame to some degree, my guess is that women use it more than men...Men have used their larger size to intimidate and control power. Women have had to resort to more subtle devices, such as shame. ...Women will probably continue to shame men. ...To a large degree feminism has shamed men into silence in the political sphere (qtd.in Probyn 80).

How can one understand Blader’s words that feminism “shamed men into silence”?

Thanks to feminist studies, the issues of female shame and humiliation, under patriarchal systems in particular, were brought to attention. Significantly, male shame that does not relate to homosexuality (*gay shame*), and in some cases race (*black masculinity*) appears to stay in the shadow of the studies of female shame, with masculinity itself only recently becoming the subject of academic research.

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35 In “Return of the Male”, Martin Amis reviews *Iron John* conveying a British perspective on the book. Amis remarks that while Bly’s book dominated the *New York Times* best-seller list for nearly a year and “made a heavy impact on many aspects of American life”, it was not very well received in Britain. Amis explains the reason for a different responses to the book in Britain: “(...) we are British, over here; we are skeptical, ironical, etc, and are not given, as Americans are, to seeking expert advice on basic matters, especially such matters as our manhood. But the main reason has to do with embarrassment. Being more or less unembarrassable, Americans are fatally attracted to the embarrassing: they have an anti-talent for it (the Oscars, the primaries, the hearings, the trials, Shirley Temple, Clarence Thomas, Andrea Dworkin, Al Sharpton, Ronald Reagan, Jimmy Swaggart). Whereas, over here, maleness itself has become an embarrassment. Male consciousness, male pride, male rage – we don’t want to hear about it” (Amis 1991 “The Return of the Male” [online]).
Arguably, the reason for this omission is the position of men within the feminist discourse. To a certain degree feminism has created and promoted an image of men as perpetrators of oppression and violence against women, such as is apparent in the introduced comment of Adamson and Clarks (1999) who discuss shaming as a patriarchal form of subjugating women to men. Because women are perceived as victims of patriarchy (men), and shame is an emotion considered mainly in such categories, namely, as victim (shamed) and perpetrator (shamer), it is understandable how considering men as victims of any kind – as in Munt’s understanding of victimization – would deprive the feminist critique of patriarchy of sharpness. In addition to that, a certain reluctance to study male shame among men is explained in the initial statement of this thesis, namely that speaking about shame can trigger even greater shame.

Shame in the national context

As mentioned in the previous section, the writers discussed in this thesis, frequently portray the body as a site of shame. Yet, as Sally Munt (2008) points out in *Queer Attachments*, “the sites of shame are only brought into being because of the cultural, because of what dominant ideas of health and physical wellbeing dictate, through the idealization of norms” (Munt’s emphasis 2). Correspondingly, Gershen Kaufman (1989) emphasizes that shame is “first of all an individual phenomenon experienced in some form and to some degree by every person” but is equally “a family phenomenon and a cultural phenomenon” (Kaufman 191). Families, schools and other units of society can reproduce shame, however each culture has its own distinct sources and targets of shame. The shame about the self, actions or status quo, can be
culturally manufactured. Families, schools, military services and religious institutions can all construct the social machinery involved in enhancing a sense of inferiority and difference. Furthermore, Kaufman observes that shame is a principal source of identity for minorities because “shame lies at the root of all negative self-images” (Kaufman 272). Either Jewish people living in predominantly Christian cultures such as Poland or United States, or black Americans living in a white racist culture, or simply liberated woman in a patriarchal society, they all have to deal with “historical patterns of oppression”, frequently with hatred and persecution, while at the same time, those groups attempt to belong, observes Kaufman (Kaufman 272).

In *Scenes of Shame. Psychoanalysis, Shame and Writing* (1999), Adamson and Clark emphasize shame’s vital role in exposing the issues of social injustice:

(...) current discussions in literary criticism that focus on questions of race, class, and gender would do well to give more considerations to the affective sources and consequences of social injustice and inequalities of power. Shame affect is particularly relevant here. Whenever a person is disempowered on the basis of gender, sexual orientation, race, physical disability, whenever a person is devalued and internalizes the negative judgment of other, shame flourishes. Shame attends the process of subjugation in general (3).

With regard to stigmatization and marginalization of certain social groups, Sally Munt points out those practices are often rooted in the colonial past. In *Queer Attachments: The Cultural Politics of Shame* (2008), Munt illuminates how colonialisation, and its aftermath, becomes embodied in the social politics of class, gender and race. Munt argues that shame is “peculiarly organised around issues of
attachment and disattachment”, marginalising certain social groups. These groups, for instance “the underclass and the urban poor, rural labourers and peasants, ‘gypsies’ or Travellers, homosexuals, sex-workers, and racial enmities enacted by ancient colonial dictat”, are common targets within polices of many nations and their “victimisation remains historically long-lasting” argues the scholar (Munt 3). They are marginalised and thus do not belong to the privileges of the majority of society but, at the same time, they are driven by the desire to secure various forms of social belonging. As it emerges from the reading of the novels, the writers represent those marginalised in terms of ethnicity, class and nationality and through that expose the power structures between the hegemonic and marginalised.

The novels, although they bring the private male perspective to the fore of the narrative, engage with national and cultural sites of shame in the contexts they represent. Roth engages mainly with persecution of Jews, anti-Semitic ideology and the Holocaust which he ties to his protagonists’ Jewish male body. Klimko-Dobrzaniecki’s characters grow up during the oppressive communist regime that shapes their sense of national, gendered and ethnic identity. In addition, Silesia, their local setting poses questions of belonging as it is a borderline space located in-between West and East, where the histories of different nationalities intertwine. Finally, Kureishi examines issues surrounding the South Asian diaspora in Britain at the end of the twentieth century. The discourse of race, class, nationalism and gender attend shame in the characters portrayed by the presented authors. Furthermore, in their novels, the writers expose contradictions in gender ideologies with which the characters struggle in their attempt to meet the hegemonic ideal. In the Polish context, the dominant male ideal has been influenced by the ideas of Romanticism
and Catholicism, as well as discourses of patriotism, which resulted in predominant heteronormativity imposed as a norm for Polish social life. As Hanna Gosk (2011) observes the nationalistic ideas which shaped gender, have impacted on other discourses including literature. The scholar points to the exclusion of the narratives of shame and guilt, which has its source in the nationalistic discourses promoting heroic imageries. These images were coined when Poland was faced with oppression from its neighbours, yet, despite democracy, the Romantic ideology remains influential:

Despite Poland's having been free and sovereign since 1989, the national imagination continues to be influenced by romantic ideology, including an idealized construct of the Homeland, either by furthering it or opposing it. That idealized construct of the Homeland is highly selective. It tends to eliminate non-heroic alternative narratives, which could generate a sense of shame or guilt (Gosk 85).

This idealized perception of Poland, reinforced by the Catholic imagery of Poland as a mother (pol. Matka Polka) impacted on the selective approach to shame and a tendency to discuss shame in the context of Poland being victimized but not in the context when Poles were causing shame to others.

The unique comparative work, Wstyd w kulturze [Shame in Culture] (2008) edited by Ewa Kosowka, demonstrates the reluctance to shame described by Gosk. One would expect that the volume's contributors from two neighbouring cultures, Polish and Belarusian, whose countries were once united for centuries within the borders of the Polish-Lithuanian Kingdom, and later within the Russian Empire, would demonstrate similar perspectives on shame as a norm regulating social life. In
practice, quite the opposite is true. Polish scholars rarely analyse shame in contemporary Polish culture. They rather focus on shame in other cultures, traditional and contemporary, concentrating their research on philosophical and theoretical descriptions of shame. Belarusian authors analyse and illustrate manifestations of shame within their own, and mainly the most contemporary, culture. This provokes Kosowska’s conclusion that the Polish studies are weighted with something that she called ‘a shame of familiarity’ (home-madeness) understood as the fear of provincialism and the peripheral character of one’s own culture. This kind of shame of one’s own culture is alien to Belarusian academics, for whom being ashamed of their own nation and culture would itself be perceived as shameful and disgraceful. As is apparent from the example introduced here, the cultural ‘treatment’ of shame can impact on the way in which the literary narratives of shame are being read and evaluated and, therefore it has to be taken into consideration. It also demonstrates a powerful potential of shame.

Shame, nevertheless, appears a suitable perspective to approach the subject of masculinity for it can indeed reveal something about the experience of being a man; on the one hand, reading male strategies of acknowledging, experiencing and dealing with the emotion enables us to see in what ways the male gender is constructed primarily as a symbol of power and, on the other hand, how admitting shame by men is viewed as a symptom of weakness. A better understating of the nature of shame may be useful to explain a reluctance to expose men in the way women have been exposed within cultural representations. As it is apparent from this brief

36 Hollywood film productions appear particularly protective of the male ego, rarely allowing the viewer to enjoy the male body, in contrast to the female body, which has been highly sexualized and exploited in various cinematic productions.
introduction to shame studies, shame in academia appears to be strongly gendered. Whereas female shame has been recognised and interpreted from numerous and varied perspectives, there is a gap or perhaps, a 'silence', about male shame in research which this thesis intends to begin to fill.
Exposing and Uncovering Shame in Hanif Kureishi’s *Intimacy*

**Introduction**

This chapter focuses on issues of shame, intimacy and sexual desires in the novel *Intimacy* (1998) by Hanif Kureishi. Reading the confessions of the main protagonist, Jay, centres on exploration of how discourses of class, race and gender condition shame in this male protagonist. To answer the question of whether shame is axiomatic of gender, race or class appears a complex task, and this chapter starts out by acknowledging this difficulty. However, as is also apparent from the reading of Kureishi’s novel, the social politics of shame as related to race and class interrelate and further translate into a certain idea of gender. With regard to the social politics of race and class in Britain, Sally Munt’s (2008) discussion on the subject in *Queer Attachments* is instructive. As Munt points out, in Britain, ethnic minority groups and immigrants are often made “culturally invisible in discourses of racism”, however, they resurface in the discourses of class as “underclass” and as “racially inferior” (21). Social hierarchy and class positioning – Munt refers to it using the notions of ‘attachment’ and ‘disattachment’, which both, however, relate to the politics of belonging – have an emotional dimension as well, which manifests itself in affects ascribed to each class.37 Various discourses on class introduced in this chapter, shed light on the relationship between class and affects. In particular, Rita Felski’s study on shame and the lower middle class as well as Pierre Bourdieu’s insights on bourgeois tastes and resentment suggests that the emotions are generated collectively

as a result of various forms of social positioning. This positioning relates further to
the notion of gaze; that is internalized ideas of how others see us. From the first
pages of *Intimacy*, it is evident that the way Jay reacts to Susan’s presence, his
sensory experience, indicates a problem between the couple. Jay describes Susan’s
return home: “she looks at me hard, in order to have me notice her. I feel my body
contract and shrink” (I. 8). He describes his physical reaction to Susan’s gaze as
‘shrinking’, a sensation usually accompanying shame what was emphasized by the
definitions of shame introduced in the previous chapter. This quality of shame was
also expressed metaphorically in the story about the soldier Rio. Through her gaze,
Susan intends to force Jay’s attention - she wants to be seen - yet he ‘receives’ that
look almost as a physical attack and feels paralyzed by it. Jay’s interactions with
Susan expose the importance of gaze in creating the sense of self. In this chapter, the
notion of gaze has been explored with the support of Jean Paul Sartre’s insights on
shame, which highlight how looking may relate to either shame or pride. Further
discussion on looking brings various theories which expose the parallels existing
between the positioning implied by class structuring and positioning that relates to
politics of looking. In both cases, this positioning relates to either the sense of
superiority or inferiority; hence results in either pride or shame.

As Sally Munt (2008) remarks, her book *Queer Attachments* could have
discussed middle class affects in greater depth (27). In this chapter, I am taking on
Munt’s call, and drawing upon her insights on shame as related to a unique class
positioning as well as on discourses of ethnicity, I trace Jay’s relationship with
Susan, who is indicated by the protagonist as a direct source of his shame. As Jay’s
narrative progresses, however, it unravels how Jay’s emotions are affected by his
ethnic and class belonging; more specifically, by growing up in a Pakistani diaspora, being abused and stigmatized as a ‘Paki’, a racist term used to express hatred of ethnic South Asians in Britain. The main character of *Intimacy*, Jay, like Kureishi, is the son of a Pakistani father and an English mother. Although in *Intimacy* his ‘Indianness’ is never explicitly expressed, some of Jay’s comments suggest it; for instance, his interest in cricket or when he makes a remark about the structure of his family in India where uncles and aunts live in separate parts of the house (l. 79). An analysis of his relationship with Susan, provides Jay with an opportunity to talk about his own insecurities as a man specifically and becomes a pretext to comment on the position of men in contemporary Britain, in general. In one of the interviews with Kureishi, the writer discusses how changing ideas of masculinity have been at the heart of most of his stories:

> I guess I’m interested in men because I’m a bloke myself but also because I was very interested in the revolutions of my time: for gays, women, blacks and Asians – with people becoming aware of their positions. And white blokes got rather left out of that. But of course when everybody else’s position is changed so the white bloke’s position changed as well (qtd in Yousaf 14).

What is striking in Kureishi’s interest in the ‘white blokes’, is a suggestion he is one of them too. Yet, the ‘whiteness’ here appears rather an expression of class position and privileges that come with that, rather than ‘whiteness’ as a racial category. Frederik Aldama in his review of *Intimacy* argues that race manifests itself in Jay’s emotions, mainly in fear, hatred and rage, which are a result of “the accumulation of years of self-hatred” that comes from internalized racism. The reviewer further
observes that “Jay has internalized the fantasies of the black self as a degenerate other; the racist hegemony acts from within as he controls and contains himself”, which, according to Aldama, is most evident in Jay’s aggressive attitude towards Susan that he sees as a demonstration of a “violent black male” (Aldama 1098). Yet, as a more thorough investigation of Jay’s narrative demonstrates, he portrays himself as vulnerable and rather than manifesting his power over Susan, he describes her as having power over him and indicates she is the reason he feels ashamed. In *Intimacy*, Kureishi creates a male character reminiscent of Kureishi himself, who has wealth, social recognition and professional success as a writer; nevertheless, he feels failed and ashamed.

Jay locates the source of his shame explicitly: “In front of her I am ashamed” (*I.* 100). He refers to Susan, his long-term partner, whom he portrays as always “aware of her status”, by which he refers to her middle class status. The entire narrative of Jay, a middle-aged writer, consists of his account of emotional and mental struggles on the night preceding his plan to abandon Susan and their two children. The novel opens with this sentence: “It is the saddest night, for I am leaving and not coming back” (*I.* 3). Jay does not explicitly reveal the reason of his flight from home. Or, rather, he provides the reader with so many reasons that he creates confusion about what forces his departure – almost as if he wished to conceal his real motivation. As the story progresses, Jay lets the reader into his family life, gradually exposing more details about his failed relationship with Susan. In his narrative, he introduces another woman, Nina, whom he portrays as much younger than him, speaking of her as if they were lovers: “She liked to make love outside, and I didn’t mind, provided I didn’t get a draught between my legs” (*I.* 89). Although Jay
presents Nina as his lover and recalls their encounters, the couple never meets in reality during the course of the narrative. Jay indicates Susan as the person triggering the feeling of shame in him and the meaning of Jay’s confession of feeling shame could be twofold. On the one hand, it may suggest that Jay feels that Susan does not accept or tolerate him and therefore induces in Jay a feeling of being inappropriate. It may also suggest that Jay feels ashamed, and guilty, about having been unfaithful to Susan, and the feeling of self-loathing is only intensified by his partner’s presence. It is likely that Jay experiences the two sensations at once.

Despite Jay’s position being ‘upgraded’ according to his professional position as a recognized author he seems to reinstate the distance between himself and the middle-class environment he shares with his partner, Susan. As it emerges from Jay’s descriptions, it is not simply the class gap that separates them but a different emotional experience acquired while being raised in a different social background. The emotional ‘fence’ between him and Susan due to their different experiences of childhood is voiced by Jay who, in an accusing tone, states: “because she has never been disillusioned or disappointed – her life has never appalled her” (I. 31). Jay remarks about Susan’s restraint in showing her feelings, “she would consider it shameful to give way to her moods”, which is a behaviour that, in Jay’s view, results from Susan’s specific class education into “good and well-behaved” (I. 30). Jay admits to having had to struggle as a child with poor material conditions at home where “money was short” and with emotions such as fear that came with financial problems (I. 60). Because of those distinct experiences Susan has better control over her emotions and would never “lapse into inner chaos”, a state familiar to Jay, as he seems to be suggesting (I. 31). As much as Susan has no access to a great part of
Jay’s experience, in a similar mode, Jay expresses a lack of understanding of Susan’s ‘snobbery’, which he calls her “pensant for anyone titled”. He states “I find it a puzzling attachment to a class that is not even rotting, but which is completely uninteresting” (I. 31). Such comments express the different aspirations of the partners; aspirations, which nevertheless are determined by their social positioning. Although Jay indicates that Susan is the source of his shame, these are preceding conditions and factors involved in shaping Jay’s personality as sensitive to shame. Sociologists and psychologists point at how experiences acquired in childhood contribute to shame sensitivity. In *Shame and the Origins of Self-Esteem* (1996), psychologist Mario Jacoby writes that there is a “strong link between our feelings of self-worth and sense of self-worth we receive from our childhood environments” (ix). Jacoby also stresses the sense of inferiority acquired from being raised in certain race or family, which experience some form of social contempt (2). In his study on emotions, Donald L. Nathanson (1987) also refers to that sense of inferiority, which is experienced as shameful. Nathanson points out that people persecuted and humiliated because of their ethnicity, social status or gender, are prone to shame but also can easily be used to shame others. Nathanson argues that this is possible precisely because of their proximity to the experience of shame (qtd. in Pattison 114-115). Nathanson’s ideas are instructive when it comes to analyzing tensions between Jay and Susan. Jay frequently recalls situations when Susan disapproves of him, thus exposing the reader to potentially humiliating for him experiences, but at the same time, he, and by association Kureishi, has been perceived as shamer, especially regarding the negative portrayal of Susan, which critics and reviewers described as “vengefully misogynistic” (Moore-Gilbert 174).
Repugnant little book – shame in *Intimacy*

*Intimacy* has been described as a “repugnant little book” [filled with] such callousness [it] verges on the psychotic" (Connolly qtd.in Aldama 1100). It is due to the story’s “explicit and hostile account” of what was considered Kureishi’s marriage break-up and a mirror image of his own relationship with his wife, Tracey Scoffield (Moore-Gilbert 171). Most of the reviews of the novel focus on Jay’s abandonment of his children and his partner, who is persistently referred to as ‘wife’, despite the fact Jay stresses that not marrying Susan is a purposeful gesture. Kureishi’s character was assessed as “self-absorbed, selfish and irresponsible” and “shameless”; Ankur Sharma sees Jay’s confessions “shocking” for there is “no hesitation to reveal the most intimate details that one does not need to know” (Hogan 1999 “Intimacy” [online]). In addition to the negative portrayal of Susan and questionable morale of the main protagonist, it was noted that *Intimacy* “offers no deep analysis of the failure of a marriage but rather the self-pitying lament of a man driven by lust, of a writer who has taken his worthiest tools with him on his flight from responsibility and toward more sex…” (Joßner 2003 “The Future is Mixed” [online]). Kureishi’s family, his sister in particular, condemned Kureishi’s book for the portrayal of the mother, whose descriptions Kureishi’s family found insulting and damaging. The damaging content of Jay’s ‘confessions’ was indicated by Kureishi’s ex-partner herself, who used the term “double betrayal” to describe *Intimacy*; this shows she actually found the book upsetting. “Kureishi claims he would never write a character "out of revenge", but his outraged ex-partner seems to see it differently”, concludes the American writer Sylvia Brownrigg, based on her interview with Kureishi and her
own reading of the novel (Brownrigg 2010 “High Infidelity: An Interview with Hanif Kureishi”[online]). From those critical responses to the book, it becomes evident that Jay is not only ashamed, but as an alter-ego of Kureishi, he is also perceived as shamer for presenting members of his family in a way that readers, and the family, may find humiliating and disgraceful. Kureishi responded to those accusations in an interview with Nahem Yousaf by reminding the critics “I am not the text” and that *Intimacy* should be read as a work of fiction that “operates as construct – written in the first person, constructed as a confession – and this is the basis on which it should be evaluated” (Yousaf 24). Following Kureishi’s advice, the following paragraphs provide a closer look into the aesthetics and style of the novel.

It is hard to agree with these negative opinions about *Intimacy* voiced in some of the quoted reviews since they seem to emerge from a superficial reading of Kureishi’s text, from which complexity and subversive content have been overlooked. Leaving aside the question of whether the novel is autobiographical or purely fictional, Kureishi surely must have anticipated such ‘indignant’ responses when describing situations and facts that can easily be attributed to his own life. In a subversive way, Kureishi even reassures the reader about the presence of the autobiographical element in the novel, as Jay resembles Kureishi in almost every way. Apart from the details about his intimate relationship and his children, the reader can learn that Jay is now a recognized writer who finds himself “putting more of myself into the stories than formerly” (*I. 46*). Susie Thomas (2006) who explores

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38 In an interview with Nahem Yousaf, Kureishi has said he feels his novel has been misunderstood: “I think some reviewers were caught up in the furore around *Intimacy* and so haven’t yet looked fairly and squarely at the book. Nor have they taken into consideration the fact that I was aware I was playing a literary game. I consciously wrote *Intimacy* in the form of a confession and was also aware that it might be read as ‘Hanif Kureishi telling the truth about a relationship break-up.’ That too is a literary construct: it is artificial. All of one’s work is autobiographical to the extent that it reflects one’s interest. But the book hasn’t been read as a move in literary game which is quite disappointing” (Yousaf 25).
these ambiguities and ethical dilemmas of using real people in Kureishi’s fiction, and thus blurring the boundaries between autobiography and fiction, redirects the question of the text’s appropriateness to the perspective of reader proposing to investigate instead “what are the social and psychological dynamics involved in the desire of readers and critics to identify the author in his work?” (185).

This “troubling of the boundaries between fiction and autobiography” in the novel appears intentional (Moore-Gilbert 152). Jay’s confessions should be viewed as a part of the aesthetics of the shame narrative, where shame dynamics – “unexpectedness, contagiousness, paradoxicality” – has been transformed into narrative dynamics (Martinsen xiii). In the introduction to her 2003 analysis of Dostoevsky’s liars, Deborah A. Martinsen remarks that shame often appears in disguise, manifested in attitudes and emotions that should be seen as its indirect expressions; for instance, expressions as diverse as fear, violence and shamelessness but also apathy and depression can mask shame, which often lies at the heart of those other affects. This tendency to hide while feeling shame was recognized by Dostoevsky, analyzed by Martinsen; according to her, Dostoevsky identified shame one feels about oneself “as a fundamental source of lying” (Introduction xiii). The references to lying occur in 

Kureishi’s male protagonist in 

intimates

appear lonely and depressed: at some point, Jay’s friend remarks about his sloppy look and unshaved face. Moreover, the
protagonist appears very much dependent on women, on their affection and their acceptance: "I used women to protect me from other people" admits Jay (l. 20). Women are the promise of satisfying desires of love and intimacy whereas their rejection results in loneliness and shame, as evident from Jay's relationship with Susan. Thus, it could be argued, women emerge as powerful in Kureishi's text. As Moore-Gilbert (2001) observes, despite Jay's intention to portray Susan negatively, "the reader's sympathy is with her" since she is "unquestionably the victim of a cowardly act of abandonment" (175). Does Jay purposefully make the reader dislike him by admitting to deeds that are considered immoral or shameless and if so, why? For instance, Jay makes a 'confession' to Susan that only the reader can 'hear':

Susan, if you knew me you would spit in my face. I have lied to you and betrayed you every day. But if I hadn't enjoyed those women I wouldn't have stayed so long. Lying protects all of us; it keeps the important going ...Truth telling, therefore, has to be an ultimate value, until it clashes with another ultimate value, pleasure, at which point, to state the obvious, there is conflict (l. 136).

The level of self-loathing revealed in Jay's confession is disturbing. By expecting Susan to spit in his face, he demonstrates awareness of committing a kind of moral transgression that deserves condemnation, or indeed, shaming expressed in the 'spitting in the face'. Yet, Jay appears to take pleasure in being condemned; for instance, when confronted by a friend's wife who gives him a disapproving look, Jay admits: "I fancied she was already condemning me" (l. 127). This aspect of behaviour in Kureishi's protagonist drew the attention of the writer Andrew Blackman, who regards Intimacy a "strange book" (Blackman 2008 "Intimacy"

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Blackman is suspicious of the simple plot and the story, of which the honest account — apparent in quite ‘emotional’ responses to the book — was the most commented feature by critics, yet, Blackman admits to doubt the honesty of Jay’s confessions. What does not convince him is Jay’s apparent lack of guilt at abandoning his children or Jay’s sexual exploits with younger women which “sound more like a middle-aged male writer’s pornographic fantasies”. Considering all these elements of Kureishi’s narrative, Blackman concludes:

It feels as if Kureishi is straining very hard to make Jay as reprehensible as possible. Clearly he is trying to convey a sense of the isolation and lack of moral compass that many people feel, as well as the sexual frustration and powerlessness that many men feel in a feminist age, particularly those old enough to have been brought up in a more male-dominated world. But I think in trying to do so he goes too far, and makes Jay more of a caricature than a character (Blackman 2008 “Intimacy” [online]).

A ‘caricature’, an expression used by Blackman, inspires an interpretation of Kureishi’s portrayal of his male protagonist as queering. Caricaturing is a form of ridiculing by exaggerating the most distinctive and dominant features. Significantly, by expressing the view that Kureishi ‘went too far’ in his portrayal of a sexually frustrated and powerless man in the “feminist age”, Blackman reveals a certain ideal of a man, who may be a man acknowledging his new position in society, nevertheless it is not this ‘soppy’, emotional man. A certain paradox is inscribed in Blackman’s reasoning, who acknowledges “powerlessness” that men feel,
nevertheless he appears to demand of men that they deal with it ‘like a man’, that is by denying the emotional side to not become like Jay: that is, a caricature of a man.

Arguably, in *Intimacy*, Kureishi relates to two different meanings of shame: shame as exposure and shame as cover. Jeffrey Kaufman who discusses this opposite meanings of shame in *Shame of Death, Grief, and Trauma* (2010), stresses that often this distinction is dismissed. Whereas shame as exposure, namely humiliation, embarrassment, degradation and objectification are better recognized, the other face of shame as “humility, modesty, discretion, honor, redemption, pride” are not recognized by most people as shame phenomena, argues the scholar (Kauffman 12). As Kauffman points out it is essential however to view these opposites as two parts of the same dynamics to consider cover and exposure, pride and shame as “variations of each other” (12). As it seems, Jay’s confessions are aimed at not only provoking shock with the exposed details of his life and that of the others, but they also appear to be aimed at divulging readers' own “inveterate prudery and disingenuous conservatism” (Schoene-Harwood 135). Kureishi is aware that certain behaviours which are appropriate for one class may be out-of-place, or in fact a taboo, in another social environment and, as it seems, his provocations are based on transgression of these social codes. In his essay “The Rainbow Sign”, Kureishi writes about the British middle class treatment of thinking and arguments which are “almost entirely taboo”. The writer expands:

There is a real defensiveness and insecurity, a Victorian fear of revealing so much as a genital of an idea, the nipple of a notion or the

39 Schoene-Harwood uses this phrase in *Writing Men* (2000), when he discusses Alisdair Gray’s novel *Janine* (1982). Schoene-Harwood finds astonishing that such a subversive, “mischievous postmodernist” writer as Gray could “so triumphantly succeed in provoking reviewers and critics alike to divulge their own inveterate prudery and disingenuous conservatism”; a statement which could be equally applied to Kureishi in the discussed above context (135).
sex of a syllogism. Where sexual exhibitionism and the discussion
positions and emissions is fashionable, indeed orthodox, thinking and
argument are avoided (Kureishi 1985, 33).

Significantly, Kureishi describes taboos on thinking using sexual vocabulary
uncovering links between repression of the mind and sexual repression; sexuality
being another taboo used to discipline social mores. In Intimacy, Jay refers to the
taboos on sexuality when describing his friend Asif, whose happy marital life has to
be necessarily compromised by the repression of his sexual desires. Jay registers
however, that Asif reads “Anna Karenina and Madame Bovary”, referred by Jay as
“testaments of fire and betrayal”, thus exposing the conformist way Asif satisfies
some of his fantasies (I. 44). Evidently, Kureishi challenges those taboos by exposing
them, but through that exposure he wants to achieve more: he wants the reader not
only to look but also to see, in other words, to understand what he is saying. Judging
by the content of the reviews, it appears that many readers experienced Intimacy as
upsetting and difficult reading: the often emotional tone of the reviews appears to
contain some ‘aggression’ or ‘anger’ directed not only at the main protagonist of
Kureishi’s work, but also at the author himself.40 This phenomenon should induce
the reader’s curiosity to look more critically at those reviews too, in order to learn
what precisely their authors found ‘controversial’ or ‘shameful’ about the novel or
the main character. Such analysis might create a context in which the main
character’s shame is reinforced and mirrored by the emotions felt at the text itself by
those reading it. Kureishi indirectly admits he seeks readers’ emotional engagement

40 In Hanif Kureishi, Susie Thomas remarks: “Women readers have in general been more sympathetic
to Intimacy than male reviewers ...” (Thomas 141). If the opinion about the novel indeed varies
according to gender, this variation raises a question about the reasons for male readers’ lack of
sympathy (or empathy) with the Kureishi’s protagonist.
with the text: "It is quite difficult (...) to decide how far you can go in terms of your relationship with the audience. I liked *Intimacy* being a rough book in that sense; the cruelty, the fragmentation, the lack of smoothing out or over. (...) I wanted the book to be an experience" (Yousef 22). In this comment, Kureishi admits to wanting to engage and interest the reader, which can be viewed as an expression of his anxiety that he may, in fact, fail at this task.

**Shame and ethnicity**

In *On Shame*, Michael Morgan writes that the feeling of shame has its primary source in other people — in "how we see ourselves in terms of how others see us", and thus demonstrating how shame relies on gaze (47). In order to avoid shame we require a knowledge of what kind of person we ought to be and what others expect from us "in terms of which our actions show us to have failed, to be deficient, to be diminished" to ourselves and to others (Morgan 15). Morgan’s explanation proves helpful in understanding Kureishi’s confession made in “The Rainbow Sign” (1989): “(f)rom the start I tried to deny my Pakistani self. I was ashamed. It was a curse and I wanted to be rid of it. I wanted to be like everyone else” (9). The shame of being Pakistani was provoked by the racism in England at the time, which made the Pakistani community feel ‘out of place’, an expression used also to name a sensation accompanying the experience of shame. In his essay, Kureishi describes racist marches through South London at the end of the 1960s and hatred of “Pakis” encouraged by the speeches of Enoch Powell (29). Notably, Kureishi’s view on

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41 Sara Ahmed writes how the racist epithet ‘Paki’ conceals other ‘silent’ concepts within it such as dirty, outsider and immigrant. Ahmed’s work, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (2004), is concerned with emotions and how they pertain to race hierarchies and ethnicity in contemporary Britain. At the
racism relates to gaze, to the way other people view us, for he says that the British "saw them [Pakistani] as dirty, ignorant and less than human – worthy of abuse and violence" (12). The writer's emphasis on the British not 'seeing' Pakistanis, points out at the lack of recognizing them as full human beings and, further into his narrative, he expands on this lack of recognition stating that "if the British could only see them [Pakistani]" they would not be "so hostile" (author's emphasis, 28). This symbolic relationship between looking, seeing and shame is also being explored in *Intimacy* embodied in Jay and Susan's relationship and in the protagonist's comments on class; both subjects that are discussed later in this chapter.

Further into "The Rainbow Sign", Kureishi dedicates one section to the descriptions of various forms of persecution and degradation he witnessed or experienced. These issues are a recurrent subject in many of his works, frequently being brought up by the writer in interviews. In a 2009 interview for *The Independent*, Johann Hari discusses issues of race, family and sexuality in Kureishi's fiction and introduces the writer's private experiences of racial and class persecution as well. Hari relates: "they started to burn Hanif Kureishi – and attack him with chisels – when he was 13 years old" and Kureishi adds his comments on the events: "being attacked, being beaten up, being spat on – it happened the whole time" (Hari 2009 "Hanif Kureishi on the Couch" [online]). The interlocutors move on to discussing the position of children of immigrants, such as Kureishi himself, who are doomed to a "second generation blues", an expression, which according to Hari, reflects the impossibility of belonging to your parents' country ("when he went to Pakistan, people laughed out loud when he said he was English") but also not being

centre of her analysis, she locates the symbolic axis between White and non-White, a basis for all racist emotions that circulate in society, according to Ahmed.
accepted in the country where they were born either ("You walk down the street and people say to you all the time – where are you from?").\textsuperscript{42} Significantly, this difficulty or even impossibility to belong in one’s family, community and culture, is also expressed by Philip Roth and Hubert Klimko-Dobrzaniecki, discussed in the next chapters. At this point, it is worth mentioning that Philip Roth has been one of the “rebellious, scurrilous” writers who greatly inspired Kureishi, mainly by providing him with more subversive modes of representing diaspora, which appealed to Kureishi: “As a Jew from an immigrant family who refused to write PR for American Jews, Roth was a novelist Kureishi could identify with in many ways” (Thomas 2006, 193). Kureishi could easily identify with Roth’s status as a diasporic writer as well. Finally, the interviewer concludes about Kureishi’s status in Britain “he wasn't just marked on his skin; he was splintered within” (Hari 2009 “Hanif Kureishi on the Couch” [online]).\textsuperscript{43} What has begun as a shame of the skin turned into shame of the self, because of being constantly made to feel inadequate in both cultural contexts with which he was associated. Kureishi (1986) writes about racism:

> A society that is racist is a society that cannot accept itself, that hates parts of itself so deeply that it cannot see, does not want to see – because of its spiritual and political nullity and inanition – how much people have in common with each other. And the whole society and every element in it, is reduced and degraded because of it. This is why

\textsuperscript{42} Curiously, one of Kureishi’s short story collections has the title \textit{Love in a Blue Time} (1997). It was published a year before \textit{Intimacy}.

\textsuperscript{43} Hari’s remark, brings to mind the notion of ‘stigma’, defined by Erving Goffman in his work published in 1963, \textit{Stigma – Notes on the Management of the Spoiled Identity} (2009). Goffman’s interpretation of stigma points at its physical and ideological dimensions. Departing from the Greek genealogy of the word, Goffman describes how stigma which signified the signs burnt upon the body to denote a morally polluted person have come to be used as a label of disgraced person (5). The notion of shame and abject could be reconsidered in the light of Goffman’s theory on embodied emotion, such as stigma. Sally Munt points that Goffman’s work “needs integrating within an understanding of shame” (23).
racism isn't a minor or sub-problem: it reflects on the whole and weighs the entire society in the balance (Kureishi 31-32).

According to the description provided by Kureishi, the racist acts of abuse inscribed on his body, affect nevertheless the body of the society as a whole. Kureishi's imagery of the society as living organism evokes Mary Douglas' theory of the body as a metaphor of the social, where dirt and pollution are a regulatory means to impose norms and order in society; in particular, dirt and pollution participate in designating the margins of society. The image of a 'dirty Pakistani' used by Kureishi signifies social marginalization; it is the abject. Julia Kristeva describes the polluting qualities of the abject as threatening the hegemonic order. In *The Power of Horrors: An Essay of Abjection* (1984), she argues that what causes abjection is not a lack of cleanness but "what disturbs identity, system, order that does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite" (4). It is striking, that in her book, Kristeva ties the notion of abjection to anti-Semitism expressed in the images of Auschwitz she recalls immediately after her introduction of abjection. She indicates thus a direct link between racism and abjection.

Considering Kureishi’s comments on racism in “The Rainbow Sign”, Kenneth Kaleta argues, refuting the idea of long-lasting effects of racial stigmatization, that, today, Kureishi can “by no means be marginalized by a racial, national, or professional identity” (4). Although many critics observe that Kureishi is now – most notably after 1995 – a writer writing from the centre rather than from the margins, where his focus is believed to shift from ethnic to white masculinity,

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44 Kristeva describes her visits to a former Nazi concentration camp, and comments on the heap of children's shoes she sees: "the abjection of Nazi crimes reaches its apex when death, which, in any case, kills me, interferes with what, in my living universe, is supposed to save me from death: childhood, science, among other things" (4).
Kureishi's view on the matter is rather different. In a 1997 interview, the writer argues that British critics do not understand that being British “involves people with names like Kureishi or Ishiguro or Rushdie” and therefore there is no understanding of Britain being “a multicultural place”. The practice of marking him, and other similar writers, as 'ethnic writer', as “a regional writer or writing in a sort of subgenre”, Kureishi describes precisely as cultural marginalization and not recognizing that “the world is a hybrid” (qtd.in Kaleta 7). As indicated by the title of Kaleta’s book, *Hanif Kureishi: Postcolonial Storyteller* (1997), Kureishi has been regarded as a writer expressing the perspective of “subaltern”; in this case, the word referring to marginalized Pakistani diaspora, whose interest the writer was seen representing, especially in his early novels, *The Buddha of Suburbia* (1990), *The Black Album* (1995) or *My Beautiful Launderette* (1996) (Moore-Gilbert 155).45 Most of these texts depict Pakistani characters living in London (mainly Bromley, the area of London’s suburbia where Kureishi has been raised too), their perspective on life in-between two cultures, their struggles with racism and their ethnic, gendered and sexual identities. Haschemi Yekani however presents quite a different to Kaleta perspective on Kureishi in her 2011 study, *The Privilege of Crisis: Narratives of Masculinities in Colonial and Postcolonial Literature, Photography, and Film*, by stressing the Englishness of Kureishi’s works, manifested in various features of his writing:

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45 In critical and postcolonial theory ‘subaltern’ has come to refer to the social groups that are excluded from a society’s established structures for political representation. In Gayatri Spivak’s “Can the Subaltern Speak?”, from which the term originates, the major focus is on women silenced in the history which belongs to men. Spivak pays particular attention to Freud and his studies on hysteria, which according to her is an example of “use of women as a scapegoat” specific of “masculine-imperialist ideological formation” (92).
Being a monoglot of English with nearly all his work set in London, Kureishi’s writing stands in the tradition of the ‘condition of England novel’. He seldom directly addresses the relationship of the former colonies and England as has been central to the texts of ‘world writers’ such as V.S. Naipaul or Salman Rushdie. Nonetheless, his work is immensely telling with regard to the construction of postcolonial masculinities (Yekani 158).

According to Yekani, Kureishi is a new “distinctly British” voice from the centre, although she admits the diaspora experience has been “central to writers of his generation” who are the children of second or third generation living in Britain (158). Yekani argues that unlike *The Buddha of Suburbia* and *The Black Album*, *Intimacy* represents a shift of focus from the margins to the centre where there is a tendency “to re-center his male heroes who seek success and approval” (159). However, it seems that although Kureishi speaks from the centre, as evident for instance from the construction of his male protagonist Jay, a middle-class recognized author, he nevertheless disturbs and queers that centre. This is evident in Kureishi’s representations of different forms of marginalization, not only within the diaspora, but also within other structures based on a negotiation of power, such as gender and class. As Esterino Adami highlights in *Essays on Diaspora* (2006), the diasporic context is affected by both the periphery and the centre whereas diasporic literature becomes not only a vehicle for communicating a new cultural approach but, most importantly, “acknowledges the denunciation of intolerance, discrimination and abuse” (15).
In *British Asian Fiction* (2010) Sara Upstone discusses Kureishi’s reluctance to be defined as an Asian author stressing that despite Kureishi’s resistance to seeing himself as an ‘ethnic’ writer, his work is “undoubtedly informed by his personal experience of racial politics in Britain” (40). Even when not explicitly about ethnicity, argues Upstone, his texts “offer perspectives on identity which (...) are framed nevertheless by a unique positioning”; meaning his position between the two cultures (Upstone 40). According to Upstone, Kureishi’s techniques of challenging the simplistic ethnic, but equally gender, identifications are evident in “blurred ethnic identities”, where “fluid sexuality sees the performance of ethnic identities mirrored in equal performances of gender, frequently manifested in bisexuality” (40). In order to describe the type of literature practised by Kureishi, which sees “ethnicity ...displaced but not evaded, without entirely ceasing to be of concern”, Upstone refers to Mark Stein’s (2004) term ‘post-ethnicity’ (38). Upstone argues the post-ethnic qualities are particularly noticeable in Kureishi’s works published after 1995, such as *Intimacy, Gabriel’s Gift, Love in a Blue Time* or *Midnight All Day*, where the central characters are often white, or their race is not indicated (39). As emphasized by Upstone, Kureishi’s writing expresses the view that “Britain’s racist past should not mean a rejection of Britishness by its ethnic populations, but rather a call to [its] redefinition” (39). The bicultural characters at the centre of many of Kureishi’s stories challenge what it means to be British today. This questioning is evident in

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46 In *Black British Literature: Novels of Transformation* (2004), Mark Stein explains the term post-ethnic referring to Hanif Kureishi as the most evident example. On the one hand, Stein can be viewed as supporting Kureishi’s stance regarding his labeling. On the other, he may appear as creating yet another such ‘label’. Stein writes: “(...) why postethnic? Moreover, why postethnic literature? I’m using the term here not to build upon and thereby defend the category of “ethnic literature”; hence post is not being used in the temporal sense of superseding, but rather in a contestatory fashion. In my usage, the term postethnic literature characterizes writing that shows awareness of the expectations that so-called ethnic writing faces; I apply it to texts working through these expectations and going beyond them. “Postethnic” then, does not try to transcend the “ethnic”. Instead, it disputes the confinement of the very category” (Stein 112).
Kureishi’s subversive image of Pakistani diaspora, a narrative technique to which Hashemi Yekani (2011) refers as ‘queering’. The main goal of queering the diaspora in British literature, according to Yekani, is to challenge the understanding of diaspora as a stable identification with one’s cultural heritage and roots. She sees Kureishi as a predecessor of queering, pointing out that the queering in Kureishi is not quite “realised” but rather “hinted” at (Yekani 159). Yekani’s approach to queering, as she admits, has been inspired by Gayatri Gopinath, who stresses the ideological potential of queering, which “seeks to disrupt the naturalized notion of both the categories heterosexuality and the nation” (Yekani 159). Gopinath writes in *Impossible Desires: Queer Diasporas, and South Asian Public Cultures* (2005):

[s]uturing ‘queer’ to ‘diaspora’ thus recuperates those desires, practices, and subjectivities that are rendered impossible and unimaginable within conventional diasporic and nationalist imaginaries. A consideration of queerness, in other words, becomes a way of challenge nationalist ideologies by restoring the impure, inauthentic, nonreproductive potential of the notion of diaspora. (…) Indeed, the urgent need to trouble and denaturalize the close relationship between nationalism and heterosexuality is precisely what makes the notion of queer so compelling (11).

What can be concluded from the above passage, is that both Yekani’s and Gopinath’s approach indicate that sexuality and national ideals in particular, are at the heart of queering. This is also evident in Kureishi’s works.

Kureishi does not seem to separate these two matters; in his writing, sexuality and ethnicity are depicted as intrinsic elements of masculine identity. Perhaps one of
the most prominent examples illustrating that is the novel *My Beautiful Launderette* (1997), which revolves around the same gender relationship between two male protagonists. Kureishi points out the symbolism of that relationship, which demonstrates that for him ethnicity and sexuality are inseparable: “The boys are really the two sides of me: Pakistani boy and English boy, because I'm half Pakistani and half English. I got two parts of myself together...kissing” (qtd. in Moore-Gilbert 14). Kureishi points out how ethnicity and sexuality come into play with national ideologies, for instance, when in “The Rainbow Sign” the writer describes the relationship between Britain and Pakistan: “[t]he two countries, Britain and Pakistan, have been part of each other for years, usually to the advantage of Britain. They cannot now be wrenched apart, even if that were desirable” (38). His comment evokes the imagery of two bodies, demonstrating how the physical body and society are symbolically correlated. Also, Kureishi’s metaphor suggests an intimacy between two countries; the intimacy, which nonetheless is difficult or even impossible taking into consideration Kureishi’s comments on racism and how it affected him. Despite admitting “I’m British”, Kureishi also signals he has to abject his Britishness, for it is the British from whom he experiences abuse (Kaleta 7). The Englishness thus becomes an abject, as in Kristeva’s definition that “the abject has only one quality of the object – that of being opposed to F” (Kristeva 1). The writer admits that when faced with despise and disgust others felt at Pakistanis he felt a split expressed in his confession: “in this situation I couldn’t tolerate being myself” (12). Kureishi is an embodiment of this difficult intimacy between two cultures, Pakistani and British, which in *Intimacy* could be seen mirrored in the complex relationship of Jay and his partner Susan.
‘What men are for’ - masculinity in Kureishi

In a similar mode as Susie Thomas, Luke Ferretter (2003) writes that since 1997 Kureishi’s fiction changed its focus from ethnicity to masculinity: “[he] has turned from a concern with questions of “race” to an exploration of masculine sexuality and of the difficulties of adult relationships”, writes Ferretter (115). Susie Thomas (2005) who refers to the author’s works, such as collections of short stories *Love in a Blue Time* (1997) and *Intimacy*, as ‘middle works’, seems to be implying the middle-classness, middle-ageness of the male protagonists portrayed in those works. However, the statement that Kureishi’s early writing explores ethnicity while his later writing focuses on problems of masculinity is problematic in so far it “negates the masculinity of his ‘ethnic’ characters and the ethnicity of his White male protagonists in later …” (Yekani 159). Ruvani Ranasinha (2002) suggests that Kureishi’s shift from race to explorations of masculinity marks a more explicit examination of his central preoccupations rather than a new direction in his work (48). Those preoccupations focus on the problems of identity and belonging in contemporary Britain, and the desire of some sort of attachment, expressed also in *Intimacy* with Jay confessing “I can’t keep my loneliness and longing away” (48). As claimed by Probyn (2005), ethnic and class experiences “come alive in shame”, but issues such as ethnicity, gender and sexuality have to be redefined when their definitions fail to describe the experience of living and participating in the contemporary, hybrid world (40). It has to be stressed therefore, that Kureishi provides an important voice, not only in discussions about contemporary British identity, but, most importantly, in terms of male identity.
The changing social roles of men are a subject of great concern in *Intimacy*, where Jay frequently comments on the matter. The ‘new man’ emerging from Kureishi’s writing has difficulty in finding his place in the new social settings, particularly, in the family. According to Yekani, in all of Kureishi’s writing there is a strong emphasis on “the need for new models of belonging – to create new versions of the nuclear family” (190). In the following passage, Jay lists some of the most significant social phenomena that influenced and shaped his identity. We also learn that Susan, who is only four years younger than Jay, is described by Jay as one of “a disapproving generation of women” (I. 103). This raises the question of which generation Jay considers himself a member of:

I wonder if we haven’t been a particularly privileged and spoilt generation. Between the depravation of the post-war slump, and the cruelties of eighties, we were the children of innocent consumerism and the inheritors of the freedoms won by our seditious elders in the late sixties. We had a free, superior and somewhat lazy education. Then we went on the dole for five years in order to pursue our self-righteous politics, before starting work in the media and making a lot of money. We weren’t much restrained by morality or religion. Music, dancing and conscienceless fucking were our totems. ...Like the hippies we disdained materialism.... We were the last generation to defend communism. (...) Freud was our new father, as we turned inwards. (...) Most of my friends seem to spend most of their time on their backs, sleeping, fucking, or having therapy and talking about their ‘relationship’ on the phone. (...) The women, I think, were
fortunate to go in two directions at once, into themselves and out into the history world. They examined their lives more than we did; they experimented; the interesting ones changed more than we did. What is left?” (69-71).

In the excerpt above, Jay sums up the social changes that occurred in Britain during the last few decades of the twentieth century, and the ways in which these changes altered both, men’s and women’s lives. He refers to those changes as a collective experience and, notably, identifies with other men, for he uses the form ‘we’. He seems to exclude women (‘they’) intentionally, in order to emphasize a different experience gained from the revolution of social mores as well as the possibilities brought by feminism that some women, according to the protagonist, took advantage of. Notably, when Jay talks about himself being one of the “the inheritors of the freedoms won by our seditious elders in the late sixties” he expresses affiliation with British cultural capital not Pakistani since the matters discussed by him do not seem to apply to, for instance, his Pakistani father. The father, as Jay points, was there “to impose himself” because in the social system his father represents “[t]he man had the power and had to be protective” (I. 56). Jay’s father therefore, represents patriarchal masculinity evident mainly in his role as a provider and in exercising his power over women and children. Influenced by the ideas of psychoanalysis (Freud) and affected by feminism, Jay shows affiliation not only with a different generation than that of his father but also reveals his middle-class affiliations, apparent in his education and interests. The ‘we’ Jay represents here appears to be not only predominantly British but also white since Jay’s portrayal of the sixties appears brushed-off of other events taking place in Britain at the time, most likely affecting the Pakistani community,
such as the racist marches described by the writer in “The Rainbow Sign”. The echoes of the critique of racism, however, could be hinted at in Jay’s comment about his support for Communism. Although described as a destructive regime in Hubert Klimko-Dobrzyńcki’s novel, Communism with its ideas of social equality of races, classes and genders must have been particularly attractive among members of marginalized communities, such as the one represented by Jay.

Although Jay demonstrates his affiliation with the experience characteristic of, specifically, British culture, he frequently recalls his father, comparing himself to him in all of his endeavours, and manifesting a great preoccupation with what his father would think of him: “he [father] didn’t approve of leaving, and he liked to be chivalrous” (I. 56), or in another comment “what would Father think of that? [leaving his children]” or, in another place, “father, six years dead, would have been horrified by my sulking off. Such abandonment would have seemed undignified at the very least” (I. 54-55). As much as Jay idealizes his father, he does not fail to note the new shifts in the politics of private relationships that had occurred in between the two generations: that of his father and his own. Men are not any longer expected to provide financial protection: “he [father] didn’t see that the women could take care of themselves” remarks Jay (I. 56). He finds it hard however, to specify the position of men in the new society; although this society requires a redefinition of old forms of masculinity, it does not provide a clear idea of men's new roles. The protagonist recalls many of his male friends, ‘peeking’ into their intimate lives, their happy or broken marriages. Yet, when comparing himself to them, he does not seem to fit into any of those same roles as a husband, a lover or a partner. This experience causes a feeling of confusion and a questioning of the adequacy of men in family life:
... what men are for. Do they serve any useful function these
days? They impregnate the women. Later, they might
occasionally send money over. What else could fathers be? It
wasn’t a question Dad had to ask himself. Being a father wasn’t
a question then. He was there to impose himself, to guide, exert
discipline... He was a good man. He didn’t flee, though perhaps
he considered it (l. 115).

The new structures of society and transformation of gender roles did not erase the old
patterns, which seem to still be in operation as internalized ideals, such as those of
Jay’s father. Daniel Lea and Berthold Schoene, in their study of the representation of
masculinity in contemporary British literature, cast some light on the condition of the
masculinity crisis, which they refer to as masculinity ‘in transition’. In *Posting the
Male* (2003), Lea and Schoene argue that men today are exposed to “two
antagonistic sets of imperatives and ideals”, patriarchal and “feminist or post-
patriarchal”, which may result in what is called today a “crisis of contemporary
masculinity” (12). The authors regard the task to measure up to the patriarchal and
feminist ideals as impossible. Nevertheless, as apparent from Jay’s narrative the
imperatives implied in both ideologies are in operation affecting men’s behaviour.
Lea and Schoene compare the distressing situation modern men find themselves to
be in to that of Hamlet: “like Hamlet, contemporary manhood is caught up in
awkward transition between an old order, on the wane yet still unrelentingly
influential, and the perplexing freedom and indeterminacy of a new order, palpably
there but tragically insubstantial and beyond practical grasp” (Lea and Schoene 11). Lynne Segal (2002) emphasizes the difficulty men experience to break out of constraining gender stereotypes. She indicates shame of not being ‘man enough’ as a potential obstacle preventing men’s transformation, arguing also that in their insecurity men often turn against women. Segal writes: “attempts to reform masculinity meet the obstacle that the most familiar, the easiest way to assuage, if not arrest, men’s chronic fears and shame over whether they are ‘man enough’ has been in blaming women” (Segal 247). Jay’s questioning and not being able to fit in any of the male roles his friends seem to be comfortable with, falls into the Hamletian condition described by Lea and Schoene.

These new conditions of masculinity may result in a perception of feminism as undermining men’s position in society, which gives rise to a movement described as backlash, which critiques the women’s emancipatory activism. In Backlash (1991), Susan Faludi refers to the movement, notably, as the ‘undeclared war against women’, which, as she explains, aims to reconstruct male power in order to sustain the previous dominant position occupied by male subjects. At the same time, backlash promotes a view that women are responsible for the ‘masculinity crisis’ in Western cultures. As Lea and Schoene note, feminist theories, such as those of Judith Butler’s (1990), abolish the clear distinction between both genders and between what is considered male and female in the gender construction: “whereas patriarchy insists on gender purity and patriarchal masculinity must categorically abject the feminine, most contemporary feminism celebrate the blurring of traditional gender boundaries and actively endorse the cultivation of “female masculinity” and “male femininity”

47 The transition of masculinity from the patriarchal ‘clasp’ is a long process points Segal. As she remarks men will only fully escape old anxieties around manhood “when the whole edifice of gender hierarchy has ceased to exist” (Segal 247).
Such theories can be perceived as dangerous for the representatives of less reconstructed masculinities. Furthermore, argue Lea and Schoene, the ‘new man’ promoted by feminism, may become a potential laughing stock, “in the eyes of other, unreconstructed males” and a disappointment for women who are similarly confused by the contradictions inherent in changing ideas of masculinity (Lea and Schoene 13). Concluding the authors’ discussion, it could be argued that promoted by feminists call to reconstruct traditional masculinity may be viewed as having as its purpose to humiliate men.

It is perhaps useful to consider the meaning and the nature of humiliation. Notably, the words used to describe consequences of humiliation, such as “sense of permanent loss and feelings of impotence, frustrated rage, despair and ‘foul thirst for revenge’” evoke the imagery of emasculation and helplessness (Leask 131). In “Losing Trust in the World: Humiliation and its Consequences”, Philip Leask explains that an act of humiliation “causes a change for the worse in the position of the victim [of humiliation]” and hence, power is central to humiliation. Leask stresses that the victim should be described not as ‘feeling humiliated’ but ‘being humiliated’, which points at the active role of humiliation where power is used “unjustly with apparent impunity” resulting in “a personal sense of injustice matched by the lack of any remedy for the injustice suffered” (131). Nevertheless, the role of feminism has never been to humiliate men in the sense described above, but to expose men as occupying a privileged social position and enjoying power to marginalize women by portraying them as inferior to men, as the ‘second sex’. In other words, feminism uncovers injustice suffered by women caused by such a

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48 This is a reference to an influential work The Second Sex (1949) by Simone de Beauvoir, where she exposes the way which women are constructed in opposition to men, as the second, but also inferior sex to men.
gender construction that gives men superior position and, it is through exposure of such issues that feminism aims at abolishing domination of men over women. The definition of shame therefore, seems to describe more accurately the purpose of feminist ideology regarding traditional masculinity and Leask's distinction between shame and humiliation appears to justify this argument: "humiliation leads to a strong sense that one has been wronged, while shame involves a sense that one has done wrong and diminished oneself in one's own eyes or in the eyes of others" (131).

From this comparison, it becomes evident thus, that shame requires looking into oneself and one's own inadequacy; in this case, men's tendencies to dominate over others and exercise their superiority over women. Since shame can equally be used to silence those issues, analyzing gender relations through shame demonstrates a potential to expose inequalities as well as the imbalance of power between men and women.

As was mentioned before, in *Intimacy*, Jay voices his opinion about the new role of men in family life as distinct from that of his father's generation. He also engages with the subject of feminism. In a slightly sarcastic tone Jay remarks that Susan thinks "she's a feminist" whereas Jay sees her as "just bad-tempered" (I. 103).

Linking Susan with feminism opens up a new interpretative perspective, especially in the light of her negative portrayal in the novel: Jay's analysis of his relationship with Susan can be interpreted not merely as a relationship between a man and a woman, but also symbolically as a relationship between a man and a feminist. Since Jay claims to be ashamed in front of Susan, this poses a question as to whether Kureishi supports the view feminism has potential to shame men by invoking the feeling of being inadequate. The difficulty of providing a precise answer to that question lies in
Kureishi’s frequent ironic distance to any political ideology he (re)presents, particularly with regard to gender politics. Reading Jay’s stance may also appear problematic due to various inconsistencies in the logic of the narrative and, therefore, “a narrative voice which is not reliable” (Adami 100). In *Intimacy*, the main protagonist delivers certain political views and opinions, yet he never actually commits to any stance himself, for instance, when he admits “I am of a generation that believes in the necessity of satisfying oneself. Maybe; but I have lost my relish of living, I am apathetic and most of the time want nothing” (I. 79). Kureishi shatters the force of the first statement by introducing the doubtful “maybe”, potentially confusing the reader. Or is Jay confused? In another place, he describes himself as a “committed skeptic”, the position stressed at many points of his narrative (I. 132).

Let us consider the following passage in which Jay comments on his parents’ marriage:

What did Father’s life show? That life is a struggle, and that struggle gets you nowhere and is neither recognized nor rewarded. There is little pleasure in marriage; it involves considerable endurance, like doing a job one hates. You can’t live and you can’t enjoy it. Both he and Mother were frustrated, neither being able to find a way to get what they wanted... Nevertheless they were loyal and faithful to one another. Disloyal and unfaithful to themselves? Or do I misunderstand? (I. 57-58).

Jay appears doubtful, admitting to struggle to define his own views: “I am in at least three minds about all questions” (I. 4). Kureishi is obviously playing not only with literary conventions but also gender conventions by exposing the hypocrisy of his
parents’ marriage. The idea of being publicly shamed may prove instructive.

Breaking a marriage could be perceived as shameful for some people, who feel they failed ‘at marriage’ and therefore, despite the resentment, the couples may often remain in marriage union. This could be particularly valid for Jay who is a child of Pakistani father. The fear of shame at failing in front of others appears in other of Kureishi’s characters, and, as the writer indicates, this fear is rooted in their ethnic background. In Kureishi’s novel *The Buddha of Suburbia*, the main protagonist, Karim, describes his father who always felt “superior to the British”, a quality which Karim inherited from his father (“this was the legacy of his Indian children”). Karim concludes that as a result of this felt superiority the father made him feel that “we couldn’t allow ourselves the shame of failure in front of these [British] people” (*The Buddha of Suburbia* 250). Jay also admits to feeling failed at saving his relationship with Susan, which most likely evokes shame in the protagonist.

Luke Ferretter observes “[n]owhere is Kureishi’s wit more ambivalent than in his portrayal of gender relations” (115). While discussing the role of humour in relation to Kureishi’s political views expressed in his works, Ferretter makes an observation that appears to be accurate for *Intimacy*: “Kureishi maintains an ironic distance from both feminist and anti-feminist politics his characters articulate, to the point where it is not clear what kind of sexual politics the works written in this ironic mode express” (119). The refusal to commit to any definite stance might indeed reflect certain playfulness in the text intended by the author. However, it might also express the confusion of this male protagonist influenced by both patriarchal values of his father, the conformist middle-class life shared with his partner Susan and the liberalism promoted by feminism. The ubiquitous irony and humour in Kureishi’s
texts is often seasoned with bitterness and sarcasm. In his collection of essays, *London Kills Me* (1992), Kureishi provides a comment about his use of irony: “Irony is the modern mode, a way of commenting on bleakness and cruelty without falling into dourness and didactism”; thus, humour and irony enable one to participate in important discussions though in a more entertaining way (113). Both Ferretter and Ruvani Ranasinha (2002) argue that the ironic distance Kureishi maintains with respect to almost every political stance he represents constitutes a “refusal to commit” and the impossibility of orientation in his stance (Ferretter 115). It could be argued, however, that by refusing Susan the right to call herself a feminist, Jay in fact makes a kind of political statement. He describes Susan’s views on marriage expressed by her “fondness for chiffon and those thick cardboard invitations with embossed writing”, and therefore exposes her attachment to traditional, if not patriarchal, values. He also stresses Susan’s prudishness evident in her offence at Jay’s “solo efforts”, as he refers to masturbation (I. 103). Perhaps Jay wants to highlight a curious, at the end of the 20th century, attachment to the traditional model of family and relationship, such as that of Jay’s father, which, as shown by Jay, frequently is a source of dissatisfaction and negative emotions in both partners.

‘In front of her I am ashamed’ – shame and the gaze

Jay captures the moment when his relationship with Susan had changed, “When did it start going wrong with Susan? When I opened my eyes; when I decided I wanted to see” (I. 42). What he saw was that he was inadequate, undesired and irritating to Susan. Hence he asks, “Could I tolerate being disliked?” (I. 108). Significantly, Jay emphasizes he ‘decided to see’, meaning to recognize his feelings and his situation.
Indeed, shame is directly linked to looking and to the notion of gaze; yet, shame as related to looking appears paradoxical. On the one hand, one needs recognition and acceptance; thus, being seen. On the other hand, what can be learnt from theories of shame to avoid shame, one desires not to be looked at and wishes to hide or disappear. However, the paradox of shame, as well as its complexity, lies precisely in the nature of that look, i.e. who is looking and what is the relationship with this person or a group, and what is the way one looks. Sartre very accurately captures these opposing qualities inscribed in the nature of looking, namely its humiliating or approving character, in the following excerpt of his 1943 phenomenological essay, *Being and Nothingness*:

(…) it is shame or pride which reveals to me the Other's look and myself at the end of that look. It is shame or pride which makes me live, not know the situation of being looked at. (…) shame,…is shame of self; it is the recognition of the fact I am indeed that object which the Other is looking at and judging (Sartre's emphasis, 259).

Although Sartre presents an existentialist approach to shame manifested in his expression 'shame as shame of self', his ideas on looking express the need for acceptance and attachment highlighted by Sally Munt (2008) and Elspeth Probyn (2005) as an experience inherent to shame. From Sartre's point of view, rarely it is possible to equate looking and seeing, or being looked at and being seen. Being seen implies recognition, consideration and often understanding, whereas being looked at suggests an objectifying and often judgmental attitude, as it is shown by Sartre. Looking can be considered a penetrating activity, which also implies uncovering something that otherwise would remain hidden or concealed. It can be assumed that
shame occurs in the space between those two activities of looking and seeing. This is illustrated in Susan’s and Jay’s interactions. They both want to be seen, meaning recognized by one another, yet the ‘wanting to be seen’ they seem to understand differently. For Jay, who had experienced the position of being marginalized due to his race, recognition and acceptance are affections he seeks. This is indirectly expressed in Jay’s desperate need to receive Susan’s approval and her desire, but also Jay admits “I have liked being a necessity”; he needs to be needed (I. 32).

The space within the narrative dedicated to Susan makes her the most important agent of Jay’s behaviour and his sense of self; thus, the relationship between the two seems key to Jay’s shame. “If this novel is autobiography then one can only wince in sympathy for Kureishi’s partner (presumably now ex), exposed in all her flawed vulnerability by his childish cruelty and unremittingly personal criticisms”, writes Polly Rance in her review of Intimacy (Rance 2010 “Intimacy: Hanif Kureishi” [online]). It is true that Jay speaks in a mocking tone about Susan’s tastes recalling those elements of her personality that create an image of a repellent and fake woman: “How would I describe her? She is deliberate in her friendships as she is in everything else” (I. 28). On several occasions, Jay expresses frustration with Susan to the extent he has an urge to be violent: “I could strike her” (I.32). Jay’s anger at Susan and the negative tone of his descriptions of her was interpreted as a manifestation of the protagonist’s, and equally the writer’s, misogyny. Yet, misogyny is frequently used to label complex behaviours from which misogyny occurs only as a result rather than a cause; it therefore, provides a somewhat reductionist interpretation of the character’s behaviour. What draws attention in Jay’s descriptions of Susan is not even their malicious and hostile tone – which
presumably could have its source in Jay’s hurt feelings – but the elaborate nature of those descriptions. Jay demonstrates a thorough knowledge of Susan’s tastes, likes and dislikes and seems to know precisely what Susan expects from him; yet, he nevertheless refuses to meet her expectations. This knowledge gives him a kind of power over Susan and the ability to hurt her, such as for instance, not agreeing to marry her: “[c]ertainly I enjoyed making her the only unmarried woman in her group of friends from university...Anyhow, I still took it for granted that not marrying was a necessary rebellion” (I. 72).

The studies on race add another perspective to our understanding of the concept of gaze; namely they stress that gaze has been conditioned by racial discourses. Hashemi Yekani (2011), who discusses gaze in relation to white privilege in colonial context, argues that the privilege of looking is connected to Whiteness, what she refers as a “licence of looking openly”. Yekani writes: “I would add that White male privilege is also connected to the notion of being looked at without becoming objectified” (83). Following from that, she points at the representations of the male body, which is never presented as eroticised object of the gaze, as it is with the female body. This relates to the privileged and dominant model of white masculinity, that “must represent itself as authoritatively in control”, which according to Yekani immensely influences the way male body is represented (83). Yekani’s insights on relation between gaze and racial discourse highlight the existing imbalance between male and female gaze and also, how the white gaze is potentially

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49 The subject of objectification by male gaze, and white male gaze privilege has been also discussed by Jane Gaines in “White Privilege and Looking Relations: Race and Gender in Feminist Film Theory”, however with a focus on the representations of racialised women. In her analysis, Gaines draws on the landmark work in the politics of looking, Laura Mulvey’s “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema”, published in 1975.
more powerful since it is constructed as superior to racialised gaze. This perspective could be useful in reading Jay’s emotions evoked by Susan’s critique.

Jay provides a long list of Susan’s ‘complaints’ addressed at him, which indicate his various failures; hence, Susan’s gaze, using vocabulary of Sartre, results not in pride but in the feeling of shame in Jay. According to the protagonist, Susan undermines his skills and competence, whether in the domain of parenting by “keeping [for years] the babies and the competence to herself” (7. 113), in the maintenance of the household and in their daily encounters. Susan’s critique applies to Jay’s appearance (“your trousers are baggy...You look like a builder”), to him not making enough effort (“you are gloomy and don’t try”), to his lack of enthusiasm (“I can’t imagine you being passionate about anything”) and to his apologetic tone: “don’t say sorry. You sound pathetic” (7. 34). At the same time, she reassures him: “it’s not [only] that you’re completely useless” (7. 34-35). Presumably, those comments are more revealing than any other of Jay’s confessions for they expose Susan’s dissatisfaction and irritation with Jay, illustrating how, according to Jay, Susan diminishes and undermines Jay as a partner and a father. This most likely results in Jay’s low self-esteem evident in small details of his narrative, such as for instance when he is deciding what clothes he should take with him on his flight from home. The main criterion, Jay stresses, is that they build confidence: “shoes...I will require something both stylish and comfortable to give myself confidence” (7. 5).

As Jeffrey Kauffman remarks, when it comes to social acceptance, personal appearance “does not mean a body image” but means, rather, “the appearance of oneself to oneself through the eyes and power of the other” (14). While some readers may find Susan’s comments lacking in ‘gravity’, they may prove harmful to
someone like Jay, who may be 'shame sensitive' as a person potentially stigmatized, abused and potentially repeatedly rejected due to his ethnic belonging.

Psychological research, such as that of Helen Lynd, explains shame sensitivity, or shame proneness, by pointing to conditions preceding the occurrence of shame. Since shame is an unwanted and unexpected exposure, Lynd argues, there must be a problem prior to such exposure, such as an acquired feeling of inferiority or a sense of failure. Susan's disapproval and pointing out Jay's failures could not in itself have brought shame unless he had already "felt within [himself] not only dislike, but shame for these traits", observes Lynd (29). She suggests that because we feel ashamed of ourselves about certain matters, our physical and intellectual qualities, we already feel diminished and others have a greater power to humiliate us. The discussion on shame and class, later in this chapter, illuminates how shame inhabits social strata becoming a negative and paralysing emotion in the lower classes and a disciplining and normative affect in the upper classes. Kureishi exposes the reader to shame by making her or him witness Jay being humiliated, and by relating to the reader's capacity for empathy and sensitivity about shame. Shame is 'contagious', and most of the time, readers empathetically identify – or not, which however may result in a different kind of shame experienced by the reader, the shame of failing to engage emotionally – with those who experience it: "we experience shame's contagious, paradoxical force" (Martinsen 217). The following section provides a closer look at the relationship of Susan and Jay.
Susan and Jay

While most critics have noted the shameless and ruthless attitudes of Jay, in particular in his treatment of Susan, none has commented on Susan's behaviour towards Jay, who experiences her behaviour as violent. A number of examples illustrate this experience: “I never know what I should do, and soon I feel as if she is shoving me against the wall and battering me”, confesses Jay (I. 9). He depicts the moment when Susan returns from work: “As I toss the clothes in the washing basket, I am disturbed by a sound outside. I hold my breath. Already!” (I. 5). The character's negative bodily reactions to Susan's presence may be viewed, in the context of his intended leaving, as the result of his fear and anticipation about his plan, yet, he also admits that the feeling had occurred in the past: “often, at the thought of going home, blood will raise into my head” (I. 118). Moreover, Jay describes their interactions as an unpleasant task to be completed: “Usually, before seeing her I prepare two or three likely subjects, as if our conversations are examinations” comments Jay (I. 8). The protagonist's somatic reactions to his partner's presence, such as increase in blood pressure, holding his breath and having the sensation of shrinking, may indicate that Jay is somewhat afraid of Susan and, perhaps, that the woman holds power over him. It is important to note, that despite his critique, Jay must consider Susan's opinion about him important, otherwise she would not be able to arouse the feeling of shame in her partner. The fact that Susan's words can hurt Jay indicates his attachment to her: “I am looking forward to the day when I won't give a damn what she says, when the spell will be broken” (I. 109).

Apart from the sense of being diminished by Susan, Jay registers that Susan does not manifest sexual interest in him since he can neither “amuse” nor “arouse”
her; therefore, neither emotional nor physical intimacy between the couple seems possible (I. 100). When this important or significant other does not demonstrate any interest or engagement with us, we feel inadequate or superfluous and this is one of the reasons that Probyn sees shame mainly in the context of ‘interest’ linking the occurrence of shame to the “interruption of interest”, which, in other words, expresses a fear of ‘disattachment’ described by Munt (Probyn 2005, xii). Susan does not seem to realize how cruel her rejection feels to Jay and how deeply it affects him.

It’s been weeks since we fucked. I’ve stopped approaching Susan in that way, to see whether, by any chance, she desires me. I have waited for a flicker of interest, not to mention lust or abandon. I am a dog under the table, hoping for a biscuit. Not a crumb (I. 77)

The position of being forced to restrain himself from physical closeness with Susan for the fear of refusal and the experience of waiting like ‘a dog’ for any signs of her affection humiliates Jay. The problem seems to lie not so much in the absence of actual intercourse with Susan as more in the feeling of not being wanted. This provokes in Jay a feeling of being inadequate with a lack of the desire for physical contact from his partner, but it also potentially undermines him as a man. Jay’s wounded sense of self as a man is caused by Susan’s rejection of his sexual desire embodied in his arousal; this problem has its source in gendered construction of male sexuality and Berthold Schoene-Harwood provides interesting insights on the subject. In Writing Men (2000), Schoene-Harwood observes that the refusal to have intercourse is usually interpreted as the refusal of the aroused penis and for men, a long-lasting rejection of their body may evoke fear of ultimate impotence, which “shackle and enslave the individual” for “a man’s body is considered perfect only as
long as it is hard and erect" (Schoene-Harwood 132). Jay indicates this fear in his readiness (waiting like a ‘dog’) to have intercourse with Susan, what has to be read as his desperate need to reassure not only his manliness but, most of all, his worth: “If she wakes up, puts out her arms and says she loves me, I will sink back into the pillow and never leave. But she has never done such a thing; nor me to her” (I. 80). It is important to stress again that sex (the ‘fucking’) should not be perceived as a mere act of physical love. Jay openly admits that the woman’s erotic qualities are not essential as a reason to stay (“her [Susan’s] pubic hair is not as luxuriant and soft as Nina’s”), but rather her acceptance of him to approach her, which has to be understood symbolically, as the form of connectedness, intimacy and also reassurance of his potency: “but if she lets me fuck her here, now, on the floor, I won’t leave” (I. 35).

What follows, however, is not a love scene but something far from it: a shattering and painful exchange between the partners, one of the examples of Susan’s neglect, or even a kind of repulsion toward her partner:

‘It’s okay’ I [Jay] say. ‘Calm down, I’ll massage you’.

‘No, thank you. You don’t know how to do it. You are too rough.’

‘I see’ I say, ‘It’s not as if you ever touch me.’

‘Are you surprised?’ She says quietly, ‘You’re not, are you?’ (I. 136)

The scene that follows Susan’s refusal of Jay’s sexual advances is that of Jay’s masturbation in the bathroom, which develops from this, humiliating, rejection and appears humiliating in itself. While masturbating Jay desperately seeks a stimulus that will accelerate his orgasm; yet, the stimulus does not come. The protagonist

50 The idea of hardness as an embodiment of traditional masculinity is discussed in more depth in the chapter dedicated to Philip Roth and the soft Jewish body in his novels.
relates “when, by mistake, I glance into the mirror and see a gray-haired, grimacing, mad-eyed, monkey-like figure with a fist in front of him, and the other hand placed delicately on his side because his back hurts from lifting the children, I know I am more likely to weep than ejaculate” (I. 110). The implied shamelessness of this act is shattered by the grotesque description of the person, who is masturbating – a dark humour, most likely intended to cover the sad reality of the situation. Exposing the masturbation here has little to do with shamelessness, as suggested by reviewer, but rather exposes the protagonist as lonely and desperate (Sharma “Intimacy”). In the following confession, Jay sees his inability to sustain a relationship with Susan as a failure, which evokes the idea of shame that ‘seeps into everything’; Jay admits: “Susan and I cannot make one another happy. But the failure scars one, until it seems inevitable that such failure will attend all one’s endeavours. My robust instinct, therefore, wasn’t to give up but to persevere” (I. 92). The protagonist decides to deal with his unhappy relationship by leaving like “all the other cowardly men who had fled” (I. 83). The figure of the cowardly man is an embodiment of male shame and recalled by Jay expresses a self-condemnation; considering himself a coward is yet another reason to feel shame. At this point, Jay’s private shame, the feeling of being made to feel inadequate in his relationship with Susan, overlaps with another kind of shame: a self-loathing which is the result of his constant comparison to his father, who did not abandon his children in order to pursue his individual desires.

Many reviewers and critics interpret Jay’s flight from home as a pursuit of the new adventures with the lover Nina: “Jay, the protagonist, abandons his familial life in order to be with his beloved Nina” writes Mustafa Cirakly in “Unrelieved Desire and Protracted Fantasy in Hanif Kureishi’s Intimacy”. Although Nina seemingly
represents the possibilities of “a tender and complete intimacy,” which Jay finds is no longer possible with Susan, Bart Moore-Gilbert questions the honesty of this desire (176). He observes that in the novel, Jay “keeps Nina at arm’s length” and that his desire for intimacy is also called into question by the fact that he has chosen for his soul-mate someone who is “so evidently not his equal in intellect or life-experience” (Bart Moore-Gilbert 176-177). Whether or not Nina’s social status and intellectual capabilities make her a good match for Jay, her narrative presence is ambiguous. The first time Jay mentions Nina, he uses the past tense emphasizing her possible ‘unreality’ by saying that she was “from another world” (I. 20). Next time Jay speaks about his supposed lover she belongs to the past again: “But Nina has not gone from my mind. I am unable to let her go, yet” (I. 24). He portrays her as angelic, almost fantasy-like: “How Nina tantalizes. She is aloof, feline, graceful” (I. 82). In a monograph Hanif Kureishi (2002), Ruvani Ranasinha interprets this female character as representing “a shadowy figure of male fantasy…eager to meet all Jay’s sexual demands” (109). Indeed, after a closer look it emerges that Nina’s image provided by Jay, opposes that of Susan in almost every way. Nina is the one who almost unconditionally admires and accepts him, stating for instance “you are so neat and gentle, with a soft voice”, praising him for his kindness. Further, Jay recalls Nina’s confession about what a “perfect man [he was] for her” and that he “had everything she could want” (I. 55). Nina’s words are purged from any critique of Jay while, at the same time, she is ready to welcome all his desires: “You can do whatever you want with me. I am at your disposal” (I. 91). One sentence in particular demonstrates that Nina may, in fact, be just a construct of Jay’s imagination: “Some nights I could bang my head on the wall, particularly when I’ve lain here with Susan, knowing that my girlfriend – whichever one, but usually Nina – was out in the city”
Jay talks about the plurality of signifiers for the word 'girlfriend' proving that Nina exists in his mind as a figure of an ideal woman, who possesses, for him, desirable qualities. Her image is usually triggered in his mind whenever he needs to escape from the misery of the relationship with Susan. However, when asked directly by a friend whether the reason for leaving Susan is "because of that girl [Nina]", Jay's immediate response is "I don't see her. I have lost her" (I. 128). The 'lost' refers to an ability of imagining Nina, whose role is to produce comforting images that help Jay to escape from the despair of his actual relationship with Susan.

Even though Nina may be merely a male fantasy, her presence in the narrative provides Jay with the opportunity to talk about his sexual potency and to reassure himself as a man. "Nina encouraged me to masturbate on her back, stomach or feet while she slept. She liked me to do it before she rushed off, to have me on her on the tube" (I. 104). Nina's willingness to carry his secretions on her body – not being disgusted by them – implies the desire for the entire person. Jay escapes from reality into imaginative 'encounters' with Nina (through the course of the narrative they never actually meet), articulating the need to alleviate despair and shame.

There were mirrors in the bedroom we used. One afternoon, as I lay on the bed to wait for her, I caught a glimpse of myself. My body was thick and hairy, my stomach round, as if I'd swallowed a ball; my little prick stuck out merrily. I could have tied a pink bow on it. ...I watched myself lean over, pick up a bottle of cold champagne and press it against my balls, before swigging from the bottle. She came into the room in high heels, a suspender belt, my mac, and the
pearl earrings I'd bought her. I waved at myself in the mirror! How happy I looked (...) (I. 89-90)

Almost as if to reassure himself about his sexual abilities, Jay frequently draws attention to his penis, such as in the above fragment where the aroused penis is portrayed as 'merry' and triumphant. In another scene, during the yoga class attended by many attractive women, Jay also mentions his arousal: “I found infinite desirelessness a strain to bring on. As our souls lifted into nirvana on a collective ‘oommm’ my penis would press against my shorts as if to say, ‘Don’t forget that always I am here too!” (I. 52). The frequent images of penises incline critics, such as Petr Chalupský, to consider Intimacy as representing a Prick Lit, defined as a genre addressed at a male audience and celebrating traditional masculinity (61). Yet, at the same time as Jay ‘shows off’ his sexual potency, he also undermines it, such as for instance when he indicates aging and weakening expressed in a “weak arch” of the stream while urinating, or when describing Susan’s indifference to his sexual advances. According to Susan Bordo, women are believed to have the power to arouse a man’s desire and then to reject that desire, leaving the man humiliated, ashamed or frustrated. Pornographic images, such as the aforementioned encounter with Nina, create ‘a fantasy-land’ in which male desire and fantasies are always welcomed and the male body, no matter what it looks like, is never rejected (Bordo 1994, 275). Considering the above analysis, it seems that the context described by Bordo is likely applicable to Jay’s relationship with Nina.

Bordo observes that pornography is a context, in which “the repressed penis, haunted by old guilt and embarrassment about secret masturbation, wet dreams, unwanted erections and ejaculations, taught that what spurs out of the body is disgusting, can come out of hiding and exhibit itself without shame or fear or rejection” (275).
Desire is perceived usually only in sexual terms. A different approach to the concept of desire, highlighting the importance of the emotional bond between people, is presented by Jacques Lacan. "Desir" in Lacan is not referred to as a sexual urge but expresses a need for recognition (reconnaissance) by the other: "a mutual and reciprocal recognition in relation to other" (qtd. in Adamson and Clark 7). Lacan's interpretation of desire relates it to affects activated in social human interactions rather than in a purely sexual context. Significantly, one of the most important affects studied by Lacan was shame, which in Lacan's view occurred when the communication between people breaks resulting in "the dynamics of domination and submission" (Adamson and Clark 7). In his development on the notion of gaze, Lacan was greatly influenced by Sartre's theories on shame and looking and, similarly to Sartre, he viewed shame as the negative affect "involving the alienation of self through a paralyzing self-consciousness in relation to the other" (8). Lacan's concepts of recognition and gaze may prove instructive in reading the emotional scripts involved in specific class positioning, the subject of the next section, where both ideas seem to apply.

Class shame

In Hanif Kureishi (2001), Bart Moore-Gilbert notices that the characteristic milieu of Kureishi's later works, such as Intimacy, is very "comfortable, as his own [Kureishi's] had become" (153). This argument of the critic does not quite stand up after a closer analysis of Jay's portrayal of his milieu. As much as the writer chose

52 This concept resonates with Probyn's concept of belonging as desire for recognition through the other.
the middle-class scenery for his fictions, its portrayal in *Intimacy* is far from affirmation or approval, such as in the following excerpt:

Being lower-middle class and from the suburbs, where poverty and pretension go together, I can see how good the middle class have it, and what a separate, sealed world they inhabit. They keep quiet about it, with reason; they feel guilty, too, but they ensure they have the best of everything, oh yes. As with any other business, in marriage there soon develops an accepted division of labour, and a code of rules (*I.* 29).

Since Jay admits to see the middle class – which in his words forms a separate world – then he acknowledges it, at the same time, stressing his exclusion from what he sees and describes. Jay, himself a representative of the lower middle class, distances himself from the middle class by referring to it as ‘them’. He speaks of ‘them’ in an accusing tone; the inclusion of the interjection ‘oh yes’ manifests an emotional agitation at the almost ‘shameless’ wealth and conformity of the middle class. The level of sarcasm and bitterness detected in Jay’s description implies his contempt, or perhaps resentment, when confronted with the group’s superior social position. Jay portrays the middle class as a privileged social group, enjoying wealth, rights and political power, however one might say that such a superior position entails also a great deal of responsibility. Jay’s reference to middle class guilt then, does not seem accidental. As it was shown in the introduced definitions of guilt as a sense of inner badness caused by a transgression of moral values, guilt points at social ethics; Jay emphasizes the selfishness and self-centeredness of the middle class, and their disregard of those less well off, either in politics or in personal relationships. Shame
in contrast is “a sense of failure in the eyes of others” and, hence it relates to social
codes and positioning between social classes: “shame is fundamentally connected to
everyday sociability” (Felski 39). This separation of the classes relies not only on the
material capital but also on the emotional scripts, with shame inhabiting
predominantly the lower social strata, where it is understood as a fear of humiliation
and being exposed as inferior.

A number of scholars trace the connection between class and shame, and
further, the relationship of class positioning and power. Notably, in Distinction: A
Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste (1984), Pierre Bourdieu refers to a
‘bourgeois’, upper social class, as a “dominant group” since it is this group whose
ideals regarding beauty, activities and ‘taste’, are being strongly imposed onto other
“dominated” social groups. Bourdieu indicates how shame comes into play in the
class struggle by pointing out that the dominated groups have only two options:
“loyalty to self and the group (always liable to relapse into shame), or the individual
effort to assimilate the dominant ideal which is the antithesis of the very ambition of
collectively regaining control over social identity” (385). A similar argument is
claimed by Sally Munt, who in Queer Attachments argues that minority groups (“the
underclass, the urban poor, gay and ethnic groups”), in order to regain their ‘rights’
“must make the bourgeois as their aspirational model (...) assimilate those values
and proselytize those norms, in order that their claim gains credibility” (Munt 25).
Both Munt and Bourdieu emphasize there is no escape from being subjugated to the
power of bourgeois ‘gaze’ perceived as superior. Munt traces the examples of class
representations in British television and media, focusing particularly on those
stigmatized because of their low social status, ethnicity and sexuality. The scholar
stresses marginalizing and stigmatizing effects of class construction, which she sees as based on shame and "its allied affects", such as envy, disgust and contempt. She refers to class shame as a "wounded 'dis'attachment", therefore, supporting the view about shame relating to desire to belong and being connected with others (26).

Certain classes are predominantly portrayed negatively, such as the working class, which Pamela Fox, in her study *Class Fictions: Shame and Resistance in the British Working Class Novel* (1994) calls a "class of shame" (17). The ideas and images about distinct classes in cultural representations are furthermore internalized as emotional scripts. In her 2000 article "Nothing to Declare: Identity, Shame, and the Lower Middle Class", Rita Felski proposes looking at class not in purely socioeconomic terms, but also at its cultural and psychological dimensions – as a structure of feelings and a complex psychological matrix acquired in childhood. According to Felski, as much as it is possible to transgress class borders and move up in the social hierarchy in terms of material conditions this is not easily followed by the emotional scripts, which belong to one's origins. This view has been shared by Elspeth Probyn (2005) who notes how the way we feel and react in specific circumstances, referred to by Probyn as affective scripts, is determined, among others, by class: "our early experiences, framed by class, race, and gender are reproduced in how we understand possibility and limitation" (Probyn 84).53

Although Felski argues that the new ideologies of the 1960s and 1970s and new lifestyle promoted by the mass media "blurred the rigid distinctions between classes", Jay's portrayal of the middle class in *Intimacy* appears to suggest the contrary (35). Using Susan as an example, Jay exposes middle-class practices and

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53 In this approach, Probyn draws on Silvan Tomkins's affect theory. Tomkins defines *affective scripts* as "individual's rule for predicting, interpreting, responding to, and controlling primal affective scenes" (qtd. in *Blush* 84).
rites, which create that 'fence' separating them from the rest of society. He registers how essential this material capital is in maintaining their status and separation:

We have a lot of lamps, cushions and curtains, some of which hang across the middle of the room, as if a play is about to start... There are deep armchairs, televisions, telephones, pianos, music systems and the latest magazines and newest books in every room. Most people don't have comfort and plenty and ease like this (7.11).

The excessive décor of the house is completed with the abundance of food and other middle-class-lifestyle 'markers', such as fridges and freezers "full of soup, vegetables, wine, cheese and ice-cream", gardens where the flowers and bushes "are labelled" and where hired people "tend the garden and cut the trees..." while other people "come to clean the house" and "iron our shirts", Jay lists in one breath almost as if wanting to exaggerate his and Susan's wealth (7.28). The comparison of the house's décor to that of a theatre ("as if a play is about to start") highlights the pretentious and performative character of everything that surrounds them. This creates a 'suffocating' space intensified by the awkward atmosphere between the couple; as presented by Jay, they barely talk and if they do they usually exchange some sarcastic remarks about each other.

Arguably, the carefully constructed exterior and preoccupation with the image forces Jay to confess: "At home, I don't feel at home" (7.11). Although he is looking from within the wealth he describes – which makes his critique even more powerful – what he sees is filtered by his experiences and feelings acquired in childhood, which were the lower-middle class family in London suburbia, an experience which forms also the narratives of Kureishi's earlier novels. "Why there
hasn't been more happiness here?” wonders Jay (I. 79). The material objects do not secure happiness, as Jay learned growing up in the sixties when “every few months something new and shiny arrived”, to which Jay provides a comment, “We thought – I don’t know why – that things would be enough” (I. 22). Jay goes further in his evident critique of bourgeois lifestyle, revealing the elaborate ‘construction’ of the middle class, whose members develop a ‘code of rules’, tastes and behaviors, which they like to emulate and that become representative of this social stratum, which Jay expresses in his remark about Susan who is “always aware of her status” (I. 74). The control of the material space is followed by control of one’s emotions and desires that are considered shameful. Jay notices this in Susan whose “range of (...) feelings is narrow” for “she would consider it shameful to give way to her moods. Therefore, she keeps most of herself out of view, for fear of what others, and she herself in particular, would think” (I. 30). By referring to Susan’s restraint in expressing her feelings, Jay demonstrates an extent to which manifestation of emotions are conditioned by class which further becomes embodied in a gender construction affected by belonging to a specific class. Significantly, as Jay observes, Susan was brought up to be a “good girl” who “likes to please” (I. 30). Susan’s habit of keeping her feelings ‘out of view’ has been determined by the middle class habitus based on taboo on looking. The connection between social background and taboo on looking has been explained by Silvan Tomkins in his analysis of shame affect, introduced in the volume *Shame and Its Sisters* (1994) dedicated to Tomkins’ work. As Tomkins explains, taboo on looking has its most severe embodiment when two individuals “become intimate and look directly into each other’s eyes” (Sedgwick and Frank144). According to Tomkins, the nature of this taboo is twofold: it is taboo on intimacy (expressed in mutual looking) and constraints on the direct expression of
affects — specific for certain cultures, but also upper classes — where the face and the eyes are being the site of this expression. Significantly, what is commonly described as embarrassment, shame or disgrace is ‘losing face in front of others’. Michael Morgan (2008) writes:

Shame involves losing face and caring that we have done so. We lose face before others. (...) When we are ashamed in this way, we are focused not on what we have done but rather on how our actions or omissions show us to be to others, and we are focused on how they will see us in virtue of that ‘face’” (15).

If the face, the ‘middle class face’ in particular, cannot demonstrate emotions for fear of embarrassment, then they have to be channelled in another way. It could be assumed that Susan achieves happiness through keeping up appearances and emulating the middle-class style of living, whereas any emotional problems can be solved in the therapy room. Seeing hypocrisy in this, Jay poses a question whether “there’s a new class distinction emerging, between those who can afford to maintain their minds and emotions, cleansing themselves of toxic notions each week — and those who have to live with that which poisons them” (I. 96). This comment itself reflects Jay’s rejection of the middle-class politics described above, or perhaps, an inability to meet the conformist demands of his present milieu.

As was discussed earlier, Kureishi has been viewed as abandoning ethnic issues in *Intimacy*, in particularly when comparing to the more explicit account of those issues represented in *The Buddha of Suburbia*. Yet, in Kureishi’s works the ideologies of race and class intertwine, having further impact on construction of gender and sexuality. Published in 1990 *The Buddha of Suburbia* deals with various
discrepancies between two distinct cultures and ethnicities, English and Indian; the main protagonist, Karim, was born, like Kureishi, to an Indian father and working class English mother. The predominant feature of Karim’s emotional script is a desperate need to belong and be ‘like everyone else’, while at the same time, he experiences the impossibility of identifying fully with any of the social groups or strata: while still in India, Karim has servants, plays cricket in the afternoon and leads a wealthy life, whereas in England the ethnic difference becomes a predominant marker of his identity. The focus on ethnicity, however, disregards how important a role class plays in Kureishi’s work. Rita Felski observes that even the *The Buddha of Suburbia* is a novel about “the shifting meaning of class in the 1960s and 1970s Britain” with insights into the lifestyle and position of the lower middle class, in particular (37). She notes that although Karim eventually becomes a successful actor “escaping his suburban origins for a bohemian metropolitan world of artists and upper-middle-class intellectuals”, he is also constantly confronted with “the differences between his background and that of his new friends” and thus he seeks to scour any traces of his body and behaviour of that “suburban stigma” (*The Buddha of Suburbia* 134). Significantly, the suburban stigma mentioned by Felski appears to refer to class rather than race since it refers to material conditions embodied in the degraded urban space inhabited by the protagonist.

54 The conclusion of the scholar’s research is that lower-middle-classness is marked with “non-identity” (39). Because of their proximity to middle class, the lower middle class experiences constant ‘longing to belong on the outside’, which expresses a desire for social recognition and acceptance of those perceived as superior to them in terms of social status and material wealth. The conclusion of the above is that lower social classes form social conditions more likely to induce a sense of shame.
Despite the evident differences between the novels, a similarity between the emotional landscape described by Felski in *The Buddha of Suburbia*, and the one in *Intimacy*, in particular when Jay conveys the image of his childhood, is striking:

My childhood still tastes of fear; of hours, days and months of fear. Fear of parents, aunts and uncles, of vicars, police and teachers, and of being kicked, abused and insulted by other children. The fear of getting into trouble, of being discovered, and the fear of being castigated, smacked, ignored, locked in, locked out, as well as the numerous other punishments that surrounded everything you attempted. There is, too, the fear of what you wanted, hated and desired; (...) It isn’t surprising that you become accustomed to doing what you are told while making a safe place inside yourself, and living a secret life (I. 36).

Preoccupation with money and status, his inability to experience joy or pleasure and, most importantly, fear, which can be interpreted also as a fear of the shame of being disregarded or humiliated, becomes a predominant emotional script of coming-of-age Jay. The “secret life” mentioned by Jay may also refer to hiding or being ashamed of his origins, in particular the lower middle class, which according to John Hartley, is “the social class with the lowest reputation in the entire history of class theory” (161). Felski’s lower middle class analysis as represented in British literature, most notably in George Orwell, T.S Eliot and Kureishi, sheds some light on why this particular class has gained such a negative identity. The scholar observes that the lower middle class because of its proximity to the middle class, “is driven by the fear of shame, tortured by a constant struggle to keep up appearances on a low income”
and the “anxiety about money”, which create a “gray, cringing mentality composed equally of conformity and bitterness” (36). This image presented by Felski, fits exactly into Jay’s description of his parent’s home, where “money was short” and “anxiety handcuffed us to one another”, as Jay observes (I. 60). Most revealing with regard to structures of feelings as related to his social position, is Jay’s portrayal of his mother, who in Jay’s description, manifested very little positive feelings about herself:

Mother was only partially there. Most of the day she sat, inert and obese, in her chair. She hardly spoke – except to dispute; she never touched anyone, and often wept, hating herself and all of us: a lump of living death. She wouldn’t wash; there were cobwebs in all rooms; the plates and cutlery were greasy (I. 59).

His mother’s withdrawal, lack of aspirations and near-apathy, reveal how the material struggles become embodied in mother’s self-loathing and hatred. Those feelings translate further into mother’s relationship with her son.

'Selfish,' she called herself, because her mind hurt so much she could only think of herself. She didn’t know how to enjoy other people, the world, or her own body. I was afraid to approach her, since with such a mother you never knew whether she would send you away or put out her arms for a kiss. My existence was a disturbance. Being a burden, or interruption, I couldn’t ask her for anything (I. 60).

The dominant emotional pattern of that relationship thus, appears to be a constant emotional and physical neglect. Although Jay recognizes that his mother’s behaviour
was, in a way, against her will, it must have affected his sense of self-esteem but also, presumably, his relationships with women. In *Culture of Shame*, Andrew Morrison discusses the role of parents in forming a personality sensitive to shame. The psychologist argues parents’ neglect and abuse are attitudes equally responsible for the development of the sense of worthlessness in a child: “shame and shame sensitivity are inevitable legacies of unresponsive or absent idealizable parents during childhood” (Morrison 77). Some of Jay’s mother’s self-loathing may have been transmitted onto Jay and internalised since, as Sally Munt indicates, the emotions are ‘sticky’ whereas the human psyche is “a leaky sponge frantically absorbing all the affects in its environment” (Munt 13). Jay’s relationship with his mother provided him with a somewhat distorted model of the man-woman relationship.

**Shame as failed intimacy**

In an interview with Nahem Yousaf, Kureishi describes *Intimacy* as the novel about failed intimacy. He also provides the interviewer with his own definition of intimacy: “…the story is about failed intimacy or desire for intimacy. It is certainly about desire but what it is a desire for I’m not entirely sure: certainly for recognition rather than union, being recognised, being seen, being understood” (Nahem 20). Kureishi’s understanding of intimacy implies its direct relation to shame, as explained by Helen Block Lewis, who argues that shame is based on the need to be accepted (thus recognized) and connected with others. Every person, says Lewis, fears social disconnection, being adrift from understanding and being understood (Scheff 2007). Anything that threatens it therefore, becomes a source of shame. According to
Kureishi, intimacy is the main theme explored in his novel, however, the confessional style used by the author represents an intimate kind of writing in itself. The word 'intimacy' comes from the Latin *intimus*, signifying the deepest, most internal part of something. Steven Howard (2001), in an article dedicated to intimacy, states that to be intimate is "to uncover one's inside, to present oneself exposed and unprotected gut. In the act of intimacy we reveal our hearts and our viscera". As apparent from Howard's definition, intimacy implies exposing oneself, which as he adds we often do with "great anxiety and trembling" for opening ourselves to another person on an intimate level "renders us exquisitely vulnerable" (Howard 6). In one of his comments, Jay admits to having awareness about the principles of intimacy described by Howard, yet he appears unable to achieve it:

(...) love is dark work; you have to get your hands dirty. If you hold back nothing interesting happens. At the same time, you have to find the right distance between people. Too close, and they overwhelm you; too far and they abandon you. How to hold them in the right direction? (I. 24)

Jay talks about a 'risk' of giving oneself to another person, demonstrating fear to present his 'unprotected gut', that is to expose his feeling and accept his vulnerability as a part of the process of building intimacy.

Considering Howard's definition of intimacy, shame appears to be the opposite of intimacy, or it is a failed intimacy. It could be argued, the title of the novel, *Intimacy*, maintains an ironic relationship with its content, since Susan and Jay are a failing couple. Several times in the course of his narrative, Jay talks about his need for intimacy and love: "Is it too much to sleep in someone's willing arms?" (I.
As much as Jay craves intimacy and closeness, he also fears it, since the emotional attachment requires opening oneself to the other thus exposing the most vulnerable aspects of the self:

I used women to protect me from other people. Wherever I might be, if I were huddled up with a whispering woman who wanted me, I could keep the world outside my skin. I could stop wanting other women. At the same time I liked to keep my options open; desiring other women kept me from the exposure and susceptibility of loving just one. There are perils in deep knowledge. (...) After a certain age sex can never be casual. I couldn’t ask for so little. To lay your hand on another’s body, or to put your mouth against another’s – what a commitment that is! To choose someone is to uncover a whole life. And that is to invite them to uncover you! (I. 20)

For men, then, wanting or having intimate relationships with women is marked with both the fear of exposure and failure, which can be threatening: “Men dream about intimacy with women, at the same time as they fear it” writes Lynne Segal, who considers intimacy in terms of a complex negotiation of power in a relationship (107). Intimacy for men often implies the loss of power that comes with control of their emotions, since they have to expose themselves and their feelings and hence, become a target to be deprived of that strength. Both emotional and physical intimacy for men is marked with the spectre of possible shame. In the first case, it is the exposure of one’s feelings and emotionality and fear of being considered unmanly; in the second situation, there is a risk of failed sexual performance or
women's dissatisfaction with men's sexual performance, such as a failure to have erection perceived as an expression of men's desire for physical closeness.

Jay stresses how he used to protect himself by not letting himself feel too much: "...I have had long periods, years in fact, of imposed indifference, as if nothing mattered. ...I was detached, having learned to be cold; intact, no one could touch me, particularly the women I let fall in love with me" (J. 81). What is striking in this confession is the resemblance of those particular words to Kureishi describing his emotional state after the racist attacks to which he was subjected. In "The Rainbow Sign" the writer describes the loneliness and isolation, how he withdrew from the social life, to "a safer place within myself", and became "distant and cold" (12). Psychologist Erik Erikson, defines intimacy as not merely love making but the "ability to share with and care about another person without fear of losing oneself in the process". He also remarks that social conditions may "help or hinder the establishment of a sense of intimacy. ...If a sense of intimacy is not established with friends or a marriage partner, the result, in Erikson's view is a sense of isolation -- of being alone..." (Erikson qtd. in Elkind 16). Keeping other women at a distance creates a sense of isolation and loneliness, which Jay expresses explicitly on the night preceding his departure, "I can't keep my loneliness and longing away" (48). Such feelings of isolation are often defended against "by fantasies of merger and fusion with powerful or idealized objects or others" whereas a fear of being exposed as unlovable is countered by an intense and compulsive looking for the consolidating admiring gaze of the other" (Adamson and Clark 22). In Intimacy, such an idealised other with whom Jay sees a possibility of intimacy is Nina, presented as his lover.
Finally, Jay decides to leave Susan in order to be “alone but not lonely,” because being lonely in a relationship seems less bearable for him (I. 74). The psychological violence Jay experiences makes intimacy between the lovers impossible to achieve, causing an uncomfortable distance between them. This distance might be a source of shame not only for Jay, but for Susan as well: “Susan doesn’t touch me but presents her cheek a few inches from my lips, so that to kiss her I must lean forward, thus humiliating both of us” (I. 8). This situation causes Jay’s frustration and he projects his aggravation onto Susan evident in the way he describes her. In terms of misogynistic overtones in Jay’s descriptions of Susan, shame’s role has to be taken into consideration in explaining Jay’s hostility towards Susan. Helen Block Lewis (1971) provides a useful explanation: “When, for example, there is unrequited love, the self feels crushed by the rejection. So long as shame is experienced in this context, it is the “other” who is experienced as the source of hostility. Hostility against the rejecting other is almost always simultaneously evoked” (Block Lewis 40). Marking Jay’s behaviour as misogynistic simplifies the complex relationship between the couple, where ethnicity and class also come into play. Furthermore, as Lewis points out, in order for shame to occur, a person has to be interested in what the given other thinks of her or him: “[f]or shame to occur there must be an emotional relationship between the person and the “other” such that the person cares what the other thinks or feels about the self” (42). Considering Lewis’s perspective would suggest something opposite to misogynistic behaviour, namely that Jay respects Susan and values her opinion.

Most of the comments by critics and reviewers of Intimacy introduced in this chapter, focus on Jay’s presumable promiscuity and the sexual content of the novel.
rather than an analysis of the psychological motivation of his flight from home, which proves very difficult for Jay. He reveals a kind of resignation and a sense of shame when confronted with his partner: “Not loving Susan I insist on seeing as a weakness, as my failure and my responsibility” (I. 61). After all, Jay’s mental preparation for this departure constitutes the entire narrative. The decision to leave proves extremely difficult since the protagonist admits to numerous somatic symptoms at the thought of it, evident in such comments: “[s]omething irrevocable will have been done, and I am fearful and uncertain. As a matter of fact, I am trembling, and have been all afternoon, all day” (I. 4), or in another “[s]uddenly I feel as if I may vomit, and I slap my hand over my mouth” (I. 12) and yet another one “a nerve in my eye is throbbing. My hands seem to be shaking. I feel hollow and my nerves raw, as if I have been pierced by something fatal” (I. 23). If Jay’s flight from home was dictated by his ‘hunger’ for new sexual adventures, would his body manifest such unpleasant symptoms? The troublesome somatic reactions seem to be provoked by fear and the knowledge he may actually hurt his children and his partner: “Tomorrow I will do something that will damage and scare them” (I. 5). The powerlessness felt at the task of saving his intimate relationship causes an overwhelming sense of failure and a mixture of shame, guilt, the feelings affecting Susan as well judging from the couple’s reactions to each other: “I could have poured hot water over her head, and Susan was ready to shove my testicles into boiling water, when we rammed the car into the therapist’s drive and ran for her door” (I. 95). The aggression becomes contagious, shared not only between the couple but also affecting their children.
Jay notices how those negative feelings between him and Susan are being picked up by their sons, who appear to show the first signs of being emotionally affected by the situation between their parents, evident mostly in the somatic reactions they manifest:

Yet the children are more agitated than usual when Susan and I are together with them, as if our furies are infectious and they are weeping on our behalf. Perhaps if we continued to live together they would dream of running away. Susan wanted to send the younger boy to ‘see someone’. I said, when the parents go mad, they send their children to psychiatrists. ‘It’s you who has gone mad’, she said. ‘Your theories are insane.’ Cheerio, bitch” (I. 116).

Jay’s account of his children’s behaviour could indeed be viewed as the character’s honest motivation for leaving Susan, which further demonstrates his maturity and responsibility as opposed to the claims by the aforementioned reviewer, Sharma. The desperation of Jay’s act of leaving to end his toxic relationship, is intensified by the fact he exchanges his comfortable home and life, as well as precious time with his children for “a spot at Victor’s [a friend] where there will be draughts and dust on the floor”. Yet, as he immediately remarks, his friend “doesn’t mind whether I [Jay] am silent or voluble” (I. 7). The physical space of Victor’s flat does not matter for Jay, who merely needs a place where he can feel accepted or at least not feel ‘inadequate’. Preparing for his departure from home and Susan, Jay notes “soon we will be like strangers. No, we can never be that. Hurting someone is an act of reluctant intimacy” (I. 4). Perhaps this is the deepest intimacy they could ever achieve.
Conclusion

For those who study shame, the language of *Intimacy* establishes an immediate connection with the emotion. The main character Jay describes his feelings using the vocabulary used to describe the experience of the emotion: exposure, uncovering, failure, shrinking, desire of belonging and fear are all linked to shame. Furthermore, Jay links class, ethnicity and gender to notions of seeing and being seen, demonstrating how shame relates to a unique social positioning where the sense of inferiority and superiority is also introduced. The protagonist describes the emotional landscape of his childhood in London suburbia where he was often singled out as a ‘Paki’, his position within the class structure and reveals the impact it had on his sense of self as a man; what can be learnt from those, is that the predominant feeling of the protagonist is that of inadequacy, of being out of place, which both indicate shame. Jay provides a detailed account of his failed relationship with Susan, letting the reader into his most private activities and thoughts: he thus becomes intimate with the reader, exposing his ‘unprotected gut’. He overcomes his shame and confesses in spite of it although such exposure implies the possibility of even more shame, as was evident from the critical, or even condemnatory, responses to *Intimacy* as well as the writer. As Helen M. Lynd observes, however, that public exposure may even be “a protection against this more painful inner shame” (31). Curiously, while reflecting on the reasons he began creative work, in “The Rainbow Sign”, Kureishi makes a remark which appears to paraphrase the above statement of Lynd since Kureishi says: “[p]erhaps that is why I took to writing in the first place, to make strong feelings into weak feelings” (34).
The narrator, who resembles Kureishi, presents himself as rejected, diminished as a partner and a lover; Jay desperately seeks belonging that would alleviate that feeling. To alter his position of feeling ashamed in front of Susan, Jay decides to leave his partner, which provokes another kind of shame in him: that of being perceived as a coward. This idea, or a complex, is born from Jay's comparison to his dead father, a man who "had power" and was there to "impose himself" on his wife and children (Intimacy 56); thus he represents a patriarchal type of masculinity as in Connell's (1995) definition (77). As Jay himself points out, the father would not approve of his son's flight from home. The father's 'gaze' is constantly present provoking Jay's sense of failure of not being able to be like him. However, the traditional model of masculinity is not valid in the new social conditions described in the novel, where women can 'take care of themselves', as Jay highlights. At the same time, as it was shown by Jay's question about what men are for, it is not clear for him what is the new role of a man and what is expected from him.

In Intimacy, Kureishi touches upon the two different sides of shame, shame as cover and shame as exposure. Shame may be used for disciplining purposes to cover and correct behaviours that could be potentially polluting or immoral. Jay seems to suggest this kind of shame becomes a structuring mechanism of upper classes, which secure their position with various forms of 'proper' behaviour constructed as superior (Bourdieu 1984). The embodiment of such regulatory purpose of shame in Intimacy, is evident in Jay's reference to Susan as being educated into a 'good girl'. Goodness as imposed discipline is a significant point of reference in the Roth's novel Portnoy's Complaint (1969) discussed in the next chapter. The main protagonist, Alex, presents however a different approach towards the 'goodness' expected of him by his parents;
more precisely, he rebels against it. His attitude has to be explained by taking into
consideration his gender and his ethnicity which together play a crucial role in
determining Alex’s rebelliousness. As the next chapter demonstrates, Alex’s
rejection of ‘goodness’ forms a part of his abjection of Jewishness.

In Intimacy, Jay also describes another kind of shame, that shame used to
stigmatise people, groups and communities and mark them out as diminished and
inferior. That type of shame occurs in texts of Philip Roth and Hubert Klimko-
Dobrzaniecki too, frequently intensifying the characters’ feeling of shame about their
private matters. In this chapter, the discussion on ethnic minorities and under-classes
demonstrated how shame inhabits particular social strata, flourishing in marginalised
social groups. Kureishi’s book is important not only because the writer exposes
various social inequalities where shame becomes a powerful tool sustaining them,
but also because his book exposes how the social inequalities, embodied in ethnic,
class or gendered discourses, relate directly to legacies of colonial and patriarchal
structures of power.
The shame of being a man in Philip Roth's *Everyman* and *Portnoy's Complaint*

**Introduction**

In Philip Roth's 1969 *Portnoy's Complaint*, the main protagonist, Alexander Portnoy, cries how he cannot stop being a good Jewish boy and become a man. At the same time, he repeatedly admits to the feeling of shame that appears a constitutive part of his identity, evident also in the portrayal of his body: "you can travel the length and breadth of my body over superhighways of shame and inhibition and fear" (*Portnoy's Complaint* 124). Shame as strongly linked to the experience of becoming and being a man is also evident in Roth's 2006 novel, *Everyman* where the aging of the main protagonist is presented in terms of loss of virility. *Everyman*’s protagonist feels embarrassed by his physical transformation into vulnerability and weakness: "[t]hey were all embarrassed by what they'd become. Wasn't he? By the physical changes. By the diminishment of virility. By the errors that had contorted him and the blows – both those self-inflicted and those from without-that deformed him" (*Everyman* 91). Significantly, in both texts, the male body of the main protagonist appears an abject that indicates the feeling of shame and self-loathing: *Portnoy's Complaint* deals with the sexual urges and desires of young Alex Portnoy whereas in *Everyman* (2006), Roth provides the reader with the body plagued by various diseases and the aging process. In these texts, the writer engages with the discourses of hardness and softness exposing the ways in which these ideas intersect with the ideas of race evident in the images of the racialised
male body. In this chapter, the interpretation of bodily images in Roth's texts is supported by Susan Bordo’s research on the male body, in particular her reading on cultural imagery of the racialised body. In “Reading the Male Body”, Bordo provides commentary regarding Roth’s characters specifically, noting how Jewish men struggle to achieve manliness in Roth’s stories. According to Bordo, the main obstacle for them to achieve the desirable ideal is not a mother “who is the biggest challenge [they have] to face” but it is their Jewishness (Bordo 1999, 51). In Roth, Jewishness can be seen as representing the soft which his male characters abject in their struggle to achieve the American cultural ideal of masculinity. The concept of Jewish softness refers to various theories, which portray Jewish men as unmanly and as, in fact, feminine. In this chapter, I introduce a number of stereotypes about Jewish men, which originate from the discourses of racial inferiority popularized at the beginning of the twentieth century and which are embodied in Roth’s characters as well.

In his study *Pinks, Pansies and Punks* (2011), James Penner introduces the soft and hard binary, arguing that softness is associated with femininity and it is represented by qualities such as emotionality, mutability and penetrability (16). Hardness, in Penner’s view, functions as a structuring mechanism that shapes male behaviour and masculine gender norms; hardness, of which predominant quality is aggression, is “tacitly encouraged”, in particular in American society. Hardness further translates into a specific image of the hard body: “[t]he hard masculine body is associated with phallic dominance. In somatic terms, the masculine body is conceived of as hard, solid, rigid, or that which cannot be penetrated” (15). According to Penner, the hard masculine type is not comfortable with “the
expression of emotion" nor with the male body being put on display. Despite
hardness being promoted as a desirable quality in men in American society, Roth
queers the hard model. The protagonists discussed in this chapter challenge the hard
ideal by displaying their bodies and by expressing shame, which is not only
disempowering emotion but also emotion considered softening. As it is also shown in
this chapter, shame is particularly attached to Jewish men and Jewish diaspora in
general.

To explore the notions of hardness and softness and how they relate to
Jewishness in Roth’s novels, I draw on James Penner’s analysis of the rhetoric of
masculinity in American literary culture, which exposes the links between men’s
writing and masculine stereotypes circulating in society. As a particular example
Penner discusses the representation of Jewish masculinity and examines how literary
figures, writers, in particular American-Jewish writers, and critics, reproduce or
contradict certain masculine myths in their works. Penner’s findings provide a
framework for this analysis of Roth’s textual masculinity since *Pinks, Pansies, and
Punks*, similar to this study, draws on gender studies, in particular cultural studies on
masculinity. As Penner observes, traditional model of masculinity is linked to
hardness. This is apparent in the qualities associated with ‘hard’ masculinity, such as
intellect and reason, rationality and stasis as well as a propensity for aggression,
whereas the opposite qualities such as passivity, emotionality and mutability are
traditionally ascribed to femininity (14). Penner’s insights throw light on the possible
reason behind the cultural rejection and marginalization of Jewish men, and equally
gay men, who frequently are represented as embodying the soft qualities and as such
provide a threat to the hard model of masculinity, which holds hegemonic position in American context.

This chapter demonstrates, that in his various works, Roth masquerades Jewishness; that is, he often portrays his characters’ racial make-up in a reductionist way using cliché constructions and stereotypes. However, he makes the Jewishness hyperbolic to stage a conflict between Jewish masculinity, which represents the feminized and soft, and American, mythic ideal of a hard male, with shame and shamelessness as emotions that correspond to that struggle. I argue that this conflict mirrors the unattainable demands within the ideology of masculinity itself, for the masculine ideal in America, but, as this research now indicates, also in other cultures, appears to be based on paradoxical assumptions that result in the feeling of being inadequate, hence leading to shame in men. Shame in Roth’s novels often becomes somatic, but, as the writer demonstrates, the body, particularly the Jewish body, becomes the source of shame as well. As a particular example, I explore in more detail references to sexual potency and images of the penis as symbolizing virility and masculine prowess. For that, I refer to Susan Bordo’s analysis of cultural representations of the male body and sexuality. Bjorn Krondorfer, who in Male Confessions (2010) discusses the ways in which confessional writing can challenge the “dominant ideals of manliness”, inspire the investigation of Roth’s narrative style as concealing the emotions, which nevertheless resurface in the often changing mood of the narrative (4). Roth’s narrative aesthetics may convey the characters’ emotions, however, infrequently it is used to mask their true feelings. For instance, the tone of overwhelming resignation of the protagonists at their constant failures, often meets that of rage and anger with the narrative becoming a device to embody those
feelings; as I demonstrate such narrative strategy reflects the conflict between soft and hard.

The conflict between the Jewish and American masculine ideal in Roth's novels appears to mirror the conflict within the very construct of masculinity itself. The connection of masculinity and the recurring experience of shame in Roth's male characters can be viewed as a way of expressing masculinity in transition, otherwise referred to as 'crisis of masculinity', and is calling out to examine its possible sources as depicted by Roth. Portnoy's Complaint and Everyman both refer to the 1960s and its aftermath, a period marked by the increased activity of the feminist movement in America and, as a result, by the growing presence of women in public life. Alluding to those changes in Portnoy's Complaint, Alex proclaims the end of patriarchy by referring to his mother's dominant position in the family as to her "filling in the patriarchal vacuum" (PC 42). Beginning with the 1960s feminist movements and emerging discourses on gender contributed to a greater gender visibility; female gender that was marginalized and silenced by patriarchal discourses and the male gender previously invisible due to its assumed centrality. Referring to radical feminists specifically, such as Kate Millet for instance, James Penner describes the feminists' activity of the late 1960s as the refusal to tolerate "an interregnum of male supremacy and sexism" (226). The effect of "[t]he sexual revolution, second wave feminism, and gay revolution" was turning the society's understanding of gender and masculine identity "upside down", concludes Penner (18). These social changes are reflected in gendered, sexual and ethnic issues

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55 Second Wave Feminism refers mainly to the 1960s Women's Liberation Movement, which ideas promoted first in the United States, spread to other Western countries in the following decades. The activism of Suffragettes at the beginning of the twentieth century is referred to as First Wave of Feminism.
surrounding Roth’s male protagonists as well as in the derogatory depiction and ‘treatment’ of female protagonists that could be interpreted, by feminists in particular, as a form of backlash. Portnoy's Complaint could be regarded as directly submerged in the reality of social revolutions described by Penner, however these issues echo also in Everyman as we find a commentary on the social changes that granted women more privileges.

It didn’t begin until he was nearly fifty. The young women were everywhere—photographers’ reps, secretaries, stylists, models, account executives. Lots of women, and you worked and traveled and had lunch together, and what was astonishing wasn’t what happened—the acquisition by a husband of someone else—but that it took so long to happen, even after the passion had dwindled and disappeared from his marriage (108).

Looking for an explanation, or perhaps an excuse, for his infidelity, the protagonist blames the new social settings, in which women were introduced into a public sphere of life, to work in places reserved previously only for men.

Following these changes, the idea of masculinity crisis had emerged. The notion of masculinity crisis, however, appears a reaction to the interrogation of the hegemonic conception of masculinity specifically, which, as pointed out by Raewyn Connell at the beginning of this study, is one form of masculinity which is culturally exalted. In the American context, that hegemonic model of masculinity appears embodied in hard masculinity. Mary Louise Adams writes that the hard male body “remains culturally important as a symbol of the inevitability of male dominance and superiority” (74). However, as much as the hard body came to represent masculinity,
The idea of hardness became detached from the body, becoming associated with dominant, phallocentric tendencies more generally. The view that masculinity — that masculinity which is imagined not as ‘soft’ or ‘feminine’ — is being threatened in some way contributed to a view that masculinity is in some kind of a crisis. One piece of evidence of such preoccupation about the condition of traditional masculinity is a preoccupation with the ‘feminization’ of American culture, discussed in the literary context by James Penner, and on a cultural level by Michael Kimmel, whose insights on the subject are discussed in the next section.

The emergence of the hard male body

Hardness can have various embodiments. Psychologically hardness can be understood as a control of one’s emotions and urges whereas from a sociological perspective, hardness would be manifested in behaviours which demonstrate control, composition and authority. Last but not least, physically, hardness is embodied in a strong, muscular, and healthy body. In America, the idea of hardness as a specific quality of a man, originated at the turn of the twentieth century. In “Consuming Manhood: The Feminization of American Culture and the Recreation of the American Male Body, 1832-1920”, Michael Kimmel describes the changes in the American economic and social structure of the time, which provoked the new ways of thinking and imagining gender; most significantly, as Kimmel argues, the notion of manhood was replaced by that of masculinity. Manhood had been perceived as something boys came to express, whereas masculinity had to be achieved and proved. Masculinity was a contrasting category to femininity, and therefore the boy or a man who could not meet the requirements of this new identity risked being
marked as effeminate or sissy, the notions which also emerged at the time. The concern of being perceived as sissies, and most importantly to emphasize their difference from women, men, but white, middle-class men in particular, according to Kimmel, became obsessed with visual evidence of manliness. It was this context in which the idea of a hard body as manifesting virility was born, which on a social level manifested itself in the early twentieth century fascination with sport. It is important to stress, that all these new models of masculinity were constructed in opposition to women, racialised masculinity and immigrants which were all seen as threatening the white, middle-class masculinity holding the hegemonic position.

In his approach to the notion of crisis, Kimmel talks about the plurality of masculinity crises; whenever social status or social position of hegemonic masculinity is being undermined, the ideologies of hardness resurface in different incarnations. The examples of such recurring crises are found in the aftermath of the 1960s America and were provoked by women's movements and by the Vietnam War. The idea of a crisis, especially a 'spiritual crisis' drove the entire politics of Ronald Reagan and was a major reason for his "revolution" of hardening the nation's spirit by hardening the body; a strong and well-built physique became a collective symbol of American society's normative body during Reagan's era and can be seen resurfacing strongly again in the 1990s. In *Hard Bodies* (1994), a study of Reagan's period, Susan Jeffords observes: "the depiction of the indefatigable, muscular, and invincible masculine body became the linchpin of the Reagan imaginary; this hardened male form became the emblem not only for the Reagan presidency but for its ideologies and economies as well" (25). Jeffords observes that the hard body promoted during Reagan's era is defined as enveloping "strength, labor,
determination, loyalty, and courage" whereas the imagery of the soft body encompasses "sexually transmitted disease, immorality, illegal chemicals, "laziness" and endangered fetuses" (24). She discusses how this new classification of the hard and soft body was attributed differently to categories of gender and race. She explains: "the soft body invariably belonged to a female and/or a person of color, whereas the hard body was, like Reagan's own, male and white" (25). Although in a more subtle way, Reagan's new bodily reforms of the 1980s are based on the similar discourses of racial inferiority popularized at the beginning of the twentieth century. His politics reinforces the myth of superiority of the white male over women, but also over men of colour. Roth's character Alexander Portnoy appears an almost exemplary case of what during Reagan era was defined as the 'soft body'. Portnoy presents himself as dirty, immoral and promiscuous, as the one who, despite the obsessive fear of sexually transmitted diseases, continues to engage in sexual encounters with random partners. This shows that Roth had been most likely influenced by the negative rhetoric regarding Jewish masculinity.

Literary culture also participates and reacts to those gender upheavals. James Penner introduces critics and writers, such as Malcolm Cowley, John Crowe Ranson, Irving Howe, deeply concerned about "the feminization" of American literature. They practice, what Penner refers to as "macho criticism", that is policing texts for "feminine" and "effete" motifs and references (10). Those include not only the texts itself, but their life and circulation in the given cultures and outside, such as praising or condemning receptions, awards and prices for certain works, which is very much a part of the social politics. Penner (2011) observes: "the American writer and the intellectual are often mindful of popular culture's anxieties and suspicions. Hence,
for many writers and macho critics the act of writing itself becomes an elaborate attempt to deflect the charge of leisure-culture effeminacy" (24). In 2011, Lei Lebovitz questions Philip Roth's place in American canon. Leibovitz lays out his argument about Roth's narcissism based predominantly on Roth's novel written over forty years ago; that is, on Portnoy's Complaint. Although, as he notes, “Philip Roth’s defenders point to his later, more serious works to argue for his place in the canon” for Leibovitz those books only “make clearer his [Roth's] weaknesses” (Leibovitz 2011 “The Grapes of Roth” [online]). Leibovitz is evidently bothered by the type of male character created by Roth what is expressed in the following statement of the critic:

[t]hose who grew up on Roth’s novels may be forgiven for believing that art entails not Dickinson’s measured sublimation but Roth’s uninhibited masturbation and were only too thrilled to follow his suit; it is, after all, much easier and, I imagine, more satisfying to crown the penis king and abandon morality, civility, responsibility, and all the other blocks with which we build, step by painstaking step, the bastions of a worthwhile [American] society ((Leibovitz 2011 “The Grapes of Roth” [online]))

In his comment, Leibovitz distinguishes ‘we’, a group with a sense of “morality, civility, responsibility” to which he belongs, and from which Roth has been excluded on a basis of the literature he creates. Moreover, according to the critic, Roth is

56 Penner argues further that historically, writing, due to the competition of the literary marketplace, is often perceived as a battlefield among men of letters and how through writing they can secure their manliness or even, in some cases, become a man. The scholar provides various examples of writers and critics to demonstrate how for instance “an attack in print, and publication itself to this day, resembles a pugilistic contest in which one’s literary performance is often perceived as an external expression of one’s virility and propensity for masculine domination” (Penner 11).
perceived as a threat to the “worthwhile society” Leibovitz and others built with a great effort.

Leibovitz’s attitude towards Roth’s works is an example of literary criticism being involved in anxieties regarding gender. Leibovitz undermines Roth as a writer based on the type of the male character represented in his works, which the critic sees as threatening for the traditional values, and as indicated, traditional masculinity, he represents. James Penner looks specifically at how writers reproduce or contradict masculine myths in their works; such as those related to Jewish ethnicity. His study addresses a few crucial questions about struggles of the Jewish writers in particular, for instance: “How does the literary Jew strive to make his masculinity visible in literary culture? How does rebellion against the stereotype of Jewish softness play out in the arena of literary culture?” (Penner 12). In order to understand the tough male figures that emerged in film and media in the 1990s influencing ideals in America and outside, it is crucial to look at the gender upheavals of the 1960s and 1970s, to which such masculine models are a response.

Daniel Lea and Berthold Schoene (2003), introduced in the previous chapter, point out that feminism resulted in two antagonistic sets of “imperatives and ideals”, patriarchal and feminist, to which they refer as ‘post-patriarchal’ (12). This is experienced by men as stressful because men are uncertain which patterns to follow. What adds to this contradiction are associations of patriarchal, hegemonic masculinity with authority and the pursuit of dominance thus hardness, and the so-called ‘new masculinity’ which is characterized by abandonment of the tendencies to dominate over others (non-aggressive masculinity) associated with softness. As it becomes apparent thus, being a man appears as a constant negotiation between hard
and soft masculinity; balancing the fear of being considered too emotional (sissy) and not wanting to be considered a violent brute and sexist. Lea’s and Schoene’s findings prove useful when applied to American context too. To support this statement, let us consider the following words of the narrator of Everyman, who gives insights into the thoughts of the novel’s protagonist:

He was one of the millions of American men who were party to a divorce that broke up a family. But did he beat their [sons] mother? Did he beat them? Did he fail to support their mother or fail to support them? Did any one of them ever have to beg money from him? Was he ever once severe?... What could have been avoided? What could he have done differently that would have made him more acceptable to them other than what he could not do, which was to remain married and live with their mother? (Everyman 94).

The protagonist’s questioning indicates the feeling of remorse and guilt for abandoning his first wife and two children (“Randy and Lonny were the source of his deepest guilt” 94). At the same time, he reveals a patriarchal, if not a chauvinist, view of what is expected from men and what their role in family and outside is supposed to be. This is expressed in the protagonist’s surprise, or perhaps, confusion that the listed qualities were not sufficient to ensure the respect of his wife and sons. It is striking however, that the image of a man in the above description emerges as a

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57 James Penner (2011) argues that hardness and softness were also central to feminist struggle of the late 1960s. Penner’s provides his reasoning: “the women’s movement wrestled with the issue of adopting a politically correct gender style. Since women had been socially conditioned to be soft and ladylike, did that imply that women must embrace masculine hardness to earn their independence and liberation? Were women who embrace masculine traits – aggression, independence – in danger of becoming the same as men? For many early [he refers to the late 1960s and 1970s] feminist theorists, women needed to unsex themselves and embrace a masculine style because this was the only way to remove the cultural noose of feminine passivity” (231).
sum of negations: 'he did not beat', 'he did not fail to support', 'he was not sever', which demonstrates his lack of direction and the character's confusion as to what is 'the right thing to do' for him as a man. There is a sense of the character's anxiety about not being authoritative and executive, or in other words, at not being 'hard' in order to exercise the respect of his sons. As seen in the above example, the recurrent feeling of shame and guilt in this male protagonist seems to result from the often conflicting demands of manhood but also changes to the masculine construction itself; from one based merely on social status and economic position to one based on performance, thus more fluid and undefined. This is apparent when the character continues his somewhat naïve logic: "...he was too much the good boy, and, answering to his parents' wishes rather than his own, he married, had children, and went into advertising to make a secure living" (31). As was the case with his parents, he married with the expectation of a life-lasting relationship which instead "became his prison cell" (Everyman 31).

Since Roth engages with Jewish ethnicity, the bodily images of his male protagonists need to be interpreted not only in relation to the ideology of masculinity, but most importantly in the context of the symbolism of the Jewish body and bodily rituals within Jewish tradition, as well as discourses about Jewishness in American society. Within Jewish traditional observance, bodily integrity is essential and therefore Jewish communities developed strict rules and prohibitions regarding the body and its functioning. According to Mary Douglas (2002), these restrictions regarding the body express the need to protect the borders of social groups; in particular, minority groups. With regard to Jewish diaspora specifically, Douglas observes: "the Israelites were always in their history a hard-pressed minority. In their
beliefs all the bodily issues were polluting, blood, pus, excreta, semen, etc. The threatened boundaries of their body politics would be well mirrored in their care for the integrity, unity and purity of the physical body” (153). Deuteronomy IX, which is a crucial order of Jewish religious observance, begins with the words: “you shall not eat any abominable things” and further provides a detailed list of clean and unclean animals. In Roth, these practices are evident for instance in Alex Portnoy’s parents’ preoccupation with food and hygiene restrictions, which expresses their fear of pollution imagined as dirt and “germs” (PC 35). Douglas proposes that the sociological counterpart of rituals which express anxiety about body, especially bodily orifices and secretions is “care to protect the political and cultural unity of a minority group” (153). It is because, according to Douglas, “the body is a model which can stand for any bounded system. Its boundaries can represent any boundaries which are threatened or precarious. (...) The mistake is to treat bodily margins in isolation from all other margins” (142). The practice of protecting the borders and unity can be observed not only within diasporas but also within the whole nations. Poland, which for almost two centuries remained under oppression of various regimes, can be indicated as one of the examples. How the constant threat from others impacted on the national identity as suspicious of any form of otherness is discussed in the last chapter, based on the reading of the Polish novel Raz. Dwa. Trzy.

Considering Douglas’ insights on how the body represents the social, the explicit descriptions of the diseased body in Everyman and erotic body in Portnoy’s Complaint, both engage with bodily transgression in the context of the Jewish, but equally male, body, which as was argued by Penner (2011), is imagined as hard and

58 PC stands for the shortcut of Portnoy’s Complaint I use throughout this chapter.
contained. As Douglas highlights, the protection of any borders happens through maintaining all kinds of forms of difference. This applies not only to social groups but also to gender; namely, to maintaining difference and separation of the male and female.\textsuperscript{59} Despite the politics of separation and containment within Jewish tradition, the borders of Roth’s male body are unprotected or, even, open for the skin does not protect the interior. All kinds of secretions, such as Alex’s semen, his mother’s menstrual blood and father’s excrement, ‘leak’ from the bodies of his protagonists. Roth does not stop on the surface of the body examining the interior of the male body: through injecting, surgical alteration, centering on what passes out and through orifices such as the mouth or anus. A passage from \textit{Everyman} appears to be a medical report that conveys the all-encompassing oppressiveness of biology but also leaves the male body open on a surgical table:

The year after the insertion of the renal stent, he had surgery for another major obstruction, this one in his left carotid artery, one of the two main arteries that stretch from the aorta to the base of the skull and supply blood to the brain and that if left obstructed could cause a disabling stroke or even sudden death. (72)

Such an invasion into the male body appears a transgression not only of the Jewish body but also queering of the hegemonic imagery of the masculine body described by Penner as solid, rigid and impenetrable. The opening of the male body subverts what is perceived as the normative male gender norm in American national and cultural gender mythology. Similar aesthetics regarding the portrayal of the male

\textsuperscript{59} Douglas explains this: “I believe that ideas about separating, purifying, demarcating and punishing transgressors have as their main function to impose system on an inherently untidy experience. It is only by exaggerating the difference between within and without, about and below, male and female, with and against, that a semblance of order is created” (“Introduction” 4).
body features in Hubert Klimko-Dobrzaniecki discussed in the next chapter. His specific constitution of the male subjectivities oppose dominant nationalistic ideologies: heteronormativity, Catholicism and Communism and the models of masculinity promoted by those ideologies. It can be concluded thus, that, in Roth’s novels, the corporeal speaks for the social; for politics of gender and, indeed, masculinity. The later however, is often dismissed or treated very superficially compared to issue of ethnicity, a factor evident in a great number of studies on Roth’s representation of Jewishness.

Portnoy has aged: Everyman’s complaint

This section provides a comparative overview of the two novels analyzed in this chapter, Everyman and Portnoy’s Complaint, which have not been previously studied in relation to each other. Although the novels differ in their narrative technique and form, they seem in a dialogue: the two texts appear to be drawing from the aesthetics of shame and shamelessness. In Portnoy’s Complaint, it is the framework of psychoanalytical confession that allows the writer to bring to the forefront of his fiction the “intimate, shameful sexual detail” (Brauner 44). Alexander Portnoy, suffers from a disorder “in which strongly-felt ethical and altruistic impulses are perpetually warring with extreme sexual longings, often of a perverse nature” (PC 1). Described with a great detail, Alex’s body makes a site of shame and equally it provides a constant opportunity for it. The obsessive masturbation that led Alex to believe he gave himself cancer (PC 19), the “shit” on his pants (PC 47) or an uncontrollable “cunt crazy” penis are examples of the frequently recalled embarrassing moments leading to the creation of a character whose spheres of
existence are bound with shame: "shame and shame and shame and shame – every place I turn something else to be ashamed of" exclaims Alex (PC 50). In order to make Alex’s shame more palpable, Roth features the aesthetic of disgust bringing what is considered disgusting, and thus inappropriate and prohibited, to the fore of his narrative. He engages with disgust as a normative category when, for instance, he points out how prohibited foods are marked as ‘disgusting’ in Jewish tradition; after pork, sausage being “most disgusting of all” (PC 90). Such featuring of disgust, namely as a kind of political ‘weapon’, was pointed out by the editors of Promiscuous (2012), a recent reading of Portnoy’s Complaint by Bernard Avishai: “Portnoy and other main characters became instant archetypes, and Roth himself became a touchstone for conflicting attitudes towards sexual liberation, Jewish power, political correctness, Freudian language, and bourgeois disgust” (Avishai, Promiscuous, back cover). In addition, the disgusting in Roth’s works is bound up with the erotic, the very content that transgresses the limits of bourgeois good taste.

The content, narrative and the language of Portnoy’s Complaint appears a tribute to shame. It is not only for the almost compulsive use of the word ‘shame’ and ‘guilt’ over the course of the entire narrative, but also, and most significantly, because of the content which flouts traditional taboos, religious, sexual and ethnic, existing in the American society of the time. Many aspects of the novel, including the person of the writer, were considered shameless. In the study Philip Roth (2007), David Brauner comments on the inappropriate content of Portnoy’s Complaint of which “candid,

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Disgust is a powerful normative category. Sartre’s insights on disgust are very instructive to see that disgust is not something natural, based on senses but it is projected onto individuals through various social practices. In particular, he uses the example of anti-Semitism in France of his time to illustrate how disgust at Jews was an expression of the collective attitude of revulsion. Disgust proceeds therefore from the mind to the body, not the other way round, and it reflects the irrational fear of contamination. For more information on disgust as a regulatory tool see also Disgust: The Gatekeeper Emotion (2004) by Susan Miller, who also provides more discussion on Sartre.
detailed discussion of onanism was revolutionary in the late sixties” and of which explicit language caused the novel to be banned from many public libraries in the US (44). As it seems, however, the biggest taboo Roth violates is that of male sexuality and the male body, which he exposes as uncontrollable, vulnerable and animal-like challenging the well-established myth of the American hard male, who presents “integrity of entrepreneur” and enjoys privileges of power and domination (Savran 123). In other words, by exposing his protagonist as emotional and uncontrollable, Roth undermines the ideal of a man promoted by the American culture. Doctor Spielvogel continues his diagnosis of Portnoy’s disorder pointing that his acts of “voyeurism” and “auto-eroticism” do not result in “genuine sexual gratification” but rather in overriding feelings of shame and the dread of retribution, particularly in the form of castration” (PC 1). Spielvogel’s pseudo-psychoanalytic explanation can be viewed as Roth’s ironic allusion to Freud’s castration theory. Although Freud and most psychoanalysts in his group were Jewish, castration theory proved to be a source of harmful myths, not only to men and women in general, but to Jewish men, in particular. Castration theory, and what follows from that, castration anxiety, can be seen as “the deepest root of anti-Semitism” argues Susan Bordo (Bordo 1999, 50). Bordo remarks that the imagining of circumcision as castration is an effect rather than a cause of anti-Semitism. It is used as a proof of how barbarian, undeveloped Jews are, by mutilating their sons’ penises: “by Freud’s logic, then the fact that Jews are seen as belonging to an inferior, “feminine race...lacking virility” stems from the notion that both Jews and women seem to have been castrated”

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61 Susan Bordo notes that in terms of the issues surrounding gender *Portnoy’s Complaint* appears to be ahead of its time since it is “focusing on male sexuality as a subject to be explored rather than a subjectivity to be presumed”, thus something specific for the literatures of the 1990s (Bordo 1994, 266). In a similar mode, Bernard Avishai in his 2012 study of the novel, observes that journals and academic literature of the 1990s showed bigger interest in *Portnoy’s Complaint* than in the 1970s (28).
In Portnoy’s Complaint a great number of references to Freud’s theories can be found in Alex’s monologue. Due to Roth’s engagement with internalized racism and anti-Semitism manifested by his protagonist, Portnoy’s Complaint established Roth’s status in the literary canon and brought him a fame of “self-hating Jew”, a marker, which cannot be omitted in this study of shame in Roth (The Sunday Times, “Philip Roth: Literary hit man with a 9/11 bullet in his gun”).

“Philip Roth's newest novel Everyman continues to dredge through the very same stew of sex and dread – morality and mortality – diagnosed by Dr. Spielvogel” writes Stephen Hazan Arnoff in his review of the 2006 novel. Can the nameless character of Everyman then be considered an aged Alexander Portnoy? Although Arnoff’s investigation focuses on the religious forms represented in Everyman, when he makes a comparison between the two novels he specifically points at the insatiable sexual appetites and “burdened body” of their protagonists (Arnoff, “Everyman”). Indeed, the novels can be seen as corresponding to each other with regard to their portrayal of the main protagonist, bothered by the feelings of remorse and guilt, but primarily, through their focus on the male body portrayed as an abject; in those texts, the body is a site of oppression and shame threatens the masculine subjectivity of its owners. Everyman begins at the funeral of the nameless 71-year-old protagonist and moves back in time through various episodes of the protagonist’s life recalled by various people who, one by one, “throw dirt” on the protagonist lying in the coffin (5). Apart from this being the burying tradition, the dirt can be seen here as symbolic since the characters, and the general narrator, confront the dead

62 The Sunday Times’ overview of Roth’s legacy parodies some of that Freudian language to describe the writer’s work: “Roth’s fellow Jewish-Americans have denounced him as “a self-hating Jew” for books such as Portnoy’s Complaint, a wildly funny vision of Jewishness as a perpetual circumcision of the psyche.” (The Sunday Times, “Philip Roth: Literary hit man with a 9/11 bullet in his gun”).
protagonist with their perspective and their judgment of the events and the protagonist's actions. When the protagonist's son Randy tosses the cold dirt onto the casket the narrator observes: "any note of tenderness, grief, love, or loss was terrifyingly absent from his voice" (Everyman 14). It is hard to resist the impression that Randy's coldness should appear 'terrifying' primarily to the dead protagonist and hence this expression used by the narrator aims at evoking the reader's sympathy by stressing how painful and humiliating is the feeling of not being loved by one's own children. Notably, the dead protagonist's feelings of guilt at abandoning his wife, shame of rejection and lack of affection from his sons are materializing in the course of the narrative. From that, one could draw a conclusion that the protagonist's shame and guilt exceed his death: these feelings continue to hunt him even after his death. Although the general narrator frequently gives voice to the dead protagonist it seems that it is only in order for him to express remorse, complaint or, frequently, rage. One such example is protagonist's outrage at being faced with his sons' judgments, which undermine him and make him feel like a failure: "You wicked bastards! You sulky fuckers! You condemning little shits!" (Everyman 97). The immediacy of the expressed emotions voiced by the protagonist from beyond the grave appears surprising and curious.

Another similarity of Everyman, the protagonist, with Alex Portnoy is the character's Jewish background. The scenes that follow the funeral show the protagonist as a grandchild of Jewish immigrants, growing up in an urban New Jersey where his father runs a jewellery business and where he lived with his parents and his beloved brother. As the narrative progresses, more struggles of the protagonist's adulthood and his aging body are being introduced: "He'd married
three times, had mistresses and children and an interesting job where he'd been a success, but now eluding death seemed to have become the central business of his life and bodily decay his entire story” (Everyman 71). Health problems and various bodily predicaments do take up much of the narrative as compared with the sections dedicated to professional career, which are deprived of such attention and detail. At one point, the main character admits that should he ever write his autobiography he would entitle it “The Life and Death of a Male Body” (Everyman 52). In the discussion on the novel aired on the radio programme Fresh Air, Roth admits this title was his first idea for the book title before he changed it to Everyman. Although the radio discussion revolves around the portrayal of the main protagonist in the novel, the question that seems to be left unanswered is: what is so specific about the life and death of the male body? And what answer to this question is provided in the novel? If it is, as the protagonist says, a shameful experience, what particular aspect of ageing is shameful for a man? And finally, to what extent does the protagonist’s ethnicity come into play with this shameful experience? The ageing body and the bodily predicaments in Everyman are spoken of in relation to the concept of being manly, and indeed to the ideology of masculinity. Roth uses a medical history of illnesses, surgery and aging to expose his protagonist’s shameful weakening, loss of virility and sexual prowess.

As is evident from various theories of shame introduced in the two initial chapters, a man admitting shame is viewed as unmanly in many contexts; this stands in particular for American society. With regard to this, Ruth Benedict’s comparative study on the approach to shame in Japanese and in American society The Chrysanthemum and The Sword (1967) appears instructive. In the book, Benedict
suggests that in America, unlike in Japanese society where shame and modesty are constitutive elements of the social interactions, to show susceptibility to shame is viewed as a manifestation of weakness and failure: “those who are shame-prone are considered less likely to prosper in American society because of their lack of competitiveness” (Okano 323-38). Benedict’s study although criticized by some Japanese sociologists, such as K. Okano, for its rather superficial overview of shame in Japanese society, nevertheless represents a typically American approach to shame, which appears culturally stigmatized as a counter-productive quality to the national ideology of success. One of the main reasons for the stigmatization of shame is its association with softness, which, in light of Penner’s discussion of hardness, explains why shame becomes a particularly undesirable quality in men. According to Susan Bordo showing emotionality in men is considered unmanly as it is a demonstration of weakness and softness. As she further stresses: “to be exposed as “soft” at the core is one of the worst things a man can suffer in this [American] culture” (Bordo 55). As a consequence of the perception of shame as weakness, male shame tends to develop into other defensive reactions, active, occasionally aggressive, or shameless, which can mask shame considered emasculating for men.

Another strategy of masking shame is turning it into guilt; thus, directing the attention from the self, from the intense emotion ‘I am the shame I feel’, to one’s action. The separation of the two affects however does not always seem possible. In fact, in Roth’s male protagonists shame and guilt usually occur simultaneously making the two affects inseparable from each other. Many scholars, psychologists, sociologists and philosophers separate guilt and shame basing the two affective responses on whether they apply to one’s action (guilt) or a quality of the self.
In *Shame and Necessity* (1993), the philosopher Bernard Williams writes that guilt relates to one’s actions or omission that results in other people’s anger or resentment for us. Shame, rather than one’s actions, concerns the self: “what arouses shame, on the other hand, is something that typically elicits from others contempt or derision or avoidance. This may equally be an act or omission, but it need not be: it may be some failing or defect. It will lower the agent’s self-respect and diminish him in his own eyes” (Williams 87). Such a distinction between the two affects is blurred, for it can be imagined that actions influence the way we perceive ourselves and can evoke the feeling of guilt but equally the feeling of shame at one’s lack or being short of something.

It seems that a more revealing way of reading guilt and shame, in particular with regard to the concepts of hardness and softness, is presented by the psychologist Leon Wurmser (1981) who approaches both emotions as representing a passive, as in the case of shame, or active, as in guilt, response to something one is not proud of in front of others: “guilt is a response to strength and power whereas shame a response to weakness and impotence” (qtd.in Jacoby 4). Wurmser’s explanation indicates that guilt can serve as a means of empowerment, a ‘hardening’ method, attractive especially for men, since it is associated with strength and being in control; therefore, potentially a more ‘bearable’ emotion for men. Alex Portnoy’s masturbation is one of the examples of such a strategy, namely of transforming shame into guilt. “I am the Raskolnikov of jerking off – the sticky evidence is everywhere!”, exclaims Alex. He compares his guilt at masturbating to the guilt of Dostoyevsky’s protagonist Raskolnikov, described in the novel *Crime and Punishment* (1866), who committed a murder (*PC 20*). Although masturbation becomes Alex’s main obsession, and the
main source of his guilt, its exaggerated exposure can be viewed as a ‘hardening’ strategy that aims to present him as a ‘bad boy’. The perceived shamelessness of Alex’s behaviour appears to be a technique of covering up shame that drives him. This shame is connected equally to being Jewish and being manly, categories that, according to Alex Portnoy, exclude each other. A closer examination of Portnoy’s Complaint exposes ways in which Jewishness is perceived as a source of shame by this male protagonist.

Racialised masculinity in Roth

Alex Portnoy presents himself as driven by the guilt, shame and fear that are, in a major part, ‘inherited’ from his parents (Kilday 1969 “Portnoy’s Complaint” [online]). It is, as Alex recognizes, due to his education by them based on repression and taboos: “The guilt, the fears – the terror bred into my bones. What in their [parents] world was not charged with danger, dripping with germs, fraught with peril? Oh, where was the gusto, where was the boldness and courage?” (35). Parents’ fear described by Alex can be interpreted as expressing preoccupation about their identity and status as a minority group, as is proposed by Mary Douglas in the aforementioned discussion on taboo and pollution. Alex describes his own private ‘tortures’ of becoming a victim of his parents who impose rules, such as kosher food and hygiene restrictions, which Alex constantly transgresses. Alex’s parents demand and expect of him to be a good Jewish boy. In the protagonist’s view, ‘a nice Jewish boy’ is well-behaved and thoughtful: “a nice Jewish boy such as no one will ever have cause to be ashamed of”; yet for Alex, Jewish goodness is a manifestation of weakness (PC 120). The emphasis on shame is very significant here. Alex sees the
good son as one who does not bring shame onto himself and his parents. In this light, Alex’s shameless behaviour can be viewed as an expression of rebelliousness against his parents’ impositions but also as a rejection of those Jewish qualities, such as goodness and softness, which culturally are associated with femininity. Influenced and drawn by the American popular culture, the goyim culture, Alex simply refuses to be that “obedient and helpless little boy” (PC 73), the task which, at the same time, seems impossible for he exclaims with annoyance: “A Jewish man with his parents alive is half the time a helpless infant!” (PC 111). Alex appears particularly upset about how Jewish values imposed by his parents as well as his own Jewish qualities negatively influence his identity as a man.

The protagonist describes Jewish men as weak and a “pushover”, features from which he tries to protect himself. He refers to his father and his male friends as “the father and his fellow sufferers” commenting on their attitudes, which otherwise could be considered a positive quality, with an apparent contempt: “[i]n that ferocious way and self-annihilating way in which so many Jewish men of his generation served their families, my father served my mother…” (PC 8). In his comment Alex ties masculinity to the discourses of race, in particular, he refers to models of Jewish masculinity and Roth’s choice of vocabulary does not seem accidental here. Alex reaches for the words associated with the Holocaust, by referring to the men as ‘sufferers’ and by uttering a word ‘annihilation’ he recalls the imagery of Jewish men as victims, although, in Alex’s description, they naturally are not victims of genocide but a new gender order. Similarly to the gradual changes in the perception of gender roles and sexuality issues, feminist movements of the 1960s contributed to a new approach to race and ethnicity. This is stressed by Sally Munt,
who argues that the liberation movements of the 1960s and 1970s could be interpreted in the context of a pride and shame axis since the mentioned decades are the time when those from “underneath shame”, such as gays, women, blacks and other ethnic minorities, slip out into various historical movements such as Black Civil Movements, the Gay Liberation Front and the Women’s Liberation Movement in the 1970s (4). More specifically, Mary Douglas sees the emergence of these movements as an attempt by various social groups to liberate themselves from the suppression and subjection to patriarchal and colonial powers.

As Malcolm Bradbury observes in *The Modern American Novel* (1992), at the end of the 1960s, American writers, and particularly Jewish American writers, were faced with “a new code of moral ambiguities” that gave rise to a new protagonist, described by Bradbury as “no longer Jewish victim” but “the Jew as modern victim” who seeks “self-definition, a definition that was not solely political, religious or ethnic” (165). In *Contemporary American Fiction* (2010), David Brauner expands on Bradbury’s view suggesting that writers such as Philip Roth, but also other diasporic writers such as Richard Powers or Gish Jen, although challenge the notion of race also have to face a dilemma: while they situate themselves outside the “ordinary parameters of racial categories” and attempt to invent alternative identities for their protagonists, at the same time by repeatedly citing the term they reinstate the notion of race as defining one’s identity (Brauner 109). The novel more often recalled with regard to Roth’s engagement with the complexities of racial politics in the US is *The Human Stain* (2001), which according to Brauner presents a radical idea of “Jewishness and other liminal ‘yellow’ identities (...), used to dramatize the paradox at the heart of all discourses about race” (109). As it appears, Roth goes even further
and applies the complexities of issues related to ethnicity to his construction of masculinity. The Human Stain illustrates how ethnic stereotypes are a constitutive part of the characters' gendered make-up. The novel, which portrays Coleman Silk, an African-American protagonist who nevertheless passes as Jewish, engages with the discursive construction of Jewish and black masculinity and their symbolism in the cultural psyche. Susan Bordo's reading of the black and Jewish body proves instructive here, in particular Bordo's insights on how the ideas of softness and hardness are inscribed into the racialised body:

While the Jewish man is forced to carry the shadow of softness, the castrated, "feminine" penis in the cultural psyche of Western masculinity, so the black man has been forced to carry the shadow of instinct, of unconscious urge, of the body itself—and hence of the penis-as-animal, powerful and exciting by virtue of brute strength and size, but devoid of phallic will and conscious control, therefore undeserving of worship or even respect (Bordo 1994, 271).

The struggle with Jewish softness in Roth is reflected particularly in the imagery of a 'troubled body' of his male protagonists.

The male protagonists of Everyman and Portnoy's Complaint demonstrate preoccupation with their bodies, whether as bodily urges or predicaments, to the extent that they "resemble the torture victims" (Gilotta 28). In his analysis of body in Roth, David Gilotta argues that the specific nature of the physical torments in Roth's male protagonists manifests "interior struggles such as guilt over cultural

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63 In "Race, Class and Shame in the Fiction of Philip Roth", David Tennebaum argues that Coleman "embodies, first and foremost, a Rothian form of pigment envy", yet, he does not seem to explain what is the nature of that 'envy' for the Rothian character (Tennebaum 44).
transgressions or insecurity over their failure to live up to impossible standards of manliness” (28). The examples of a ‘troubled’ body are apparent in Portnoy’s Complaint’s scatological descriptions of Alex’s compulsive masturbation, which he presents as a disorder that took over his will. Such as for instance masturbating in a theatre for he could not stop himself confessing to feeling ashamed afterwards: “even my cock is ashamed” states Alex (132). However, neither masturbation nor sex appears an enjoyable activity but instead reasons for shame, self-disgust and anxiety of disease. Alex’s father also suffers: “did he suffer! – from constipation” (PC 5). The protagonist of Everyman builds his story around the struggle with “the sense of estrangement brought on by his bodily failing” (79). Ironically, these bodily troubles shatter the possibility of achieving the ideal of a man they set for themselves, which seems to be based on control and integrity of their bodies and their urges. Furthermore, Gilotta argues that, in Roth, guilt and shame become corporeal causing the characters “to manifest outlandish and often psychosomatic bodily symptoms” (Gilotta 28). Concluding, these bodily troubles can be perceived as symbolic evidence of the characters’ conflict between the actual Jewish self, and the American ideal they want to achieve. A recent work on shame in Kafka, Franz Kafka: A Poet of Shame and Guilt (2013), illuminates how racial shame, in particular the effeminacy myth, is a constitutive part of the Jewish male identity and sexuality. In this work, significantly, Saul Freidlander exposes Kafka’s doubts and anxieties about his own sexuality as rooted in the “antisemitic tags about the feminization of the Jewish body” in Central Europe (7).

Returning to Jewish men as portrayed by Alex, they emerge as effeminate, soft and vulnerable, hence they embody the opposite qualities of those desirable in
the American ideal of a man (PC 49). In the course of the entire narrative, Alex frequently recalls the American “WASP”, which are “blond-haired Christian” boys, according to Alex, who, at the same time, stresses his own ‘otherness’ evident in distinct customs practised by his family, but most notably, in his Jewish features that contrast this ideal (PC 146)\textsuperscript{64}. Since, in Alex’s view, the Jew – the one who was born into a Jewish ethnicity – cannot ever be a ‘real’ man everything that is associated with Jewishness and opposes the dominant concepts of masculinity has to be rejected or, using Kristeva’s term, abjected, since one’s ethnic origin and features are inseparable from one’s identity. Hence, it can be argued that Alex’s guilt, also referred to as a complex, partially comes from the constant rejection of his Jewishness. He sees Jewishness as shameful, polluting or even a disease, the view expressed in the following passage:

Doctor, what do you call this sickness I have? Is this the Jewish suffering I used to hear so much about? Is this what has come down to me from the pogroms and the persecution? From the mockery and abuse bestowed by the goyim over these two thousand lovely years? Oh, my secrets, my shame, my palpitations, my flushes, my sweats! The way I respond to the simple vicissitudes of human life! Doctor, I can’t stand any more being frightened like this over nothing! Bless me with manhood! Make me brave! Make me strong! Make me whole! Enough being a nice Jewish boy, publicly pleasing my parents while privately pulling my putz! Enough! (PC 37).

\textsuperscript{64} WASP refers to White Anglo-Saxon Protestant, which in Portnoy’s usage denotes the cultural hegemony of Americanness.
In the above excerpt, the elements of Jewishness, masculinity, shame and eroticism are brought together. In Portnoy's words, Jewishness is clearly juxtaposed with manhood defined here as strength, bravery or even a sense of completeness; Jewishness is defined as lack; lack of manliness, to be precise. Alex Portnoy's treatment of Jewish masculinity has been affected by the dominant nationalistic imagination of the male ideal in American society, embodied by sporty, blond-haired "center fielders" who are "the legitimate residents and owners of this [America] place" (PC 146).

In *Understanding Philip Roth* (1990), Murray Baumgarten and Barbara Gottfried stress how Roth's protagonists, "urban, second-generation American Jews", struggle to achieve the desirable ideal of the American mainstream male for it is antithetical to certain elements of "their ethnic [i.e. Jewish] make up" (84). In particular, what appears to be problematic is the Jewish softness which, in Roth's texts appears in many incarnations, inscribed, for instance in the concept of 'a good Jewish boy', who lacks courage to oppose his parents. Another manifestation of Jewish softness is embodied in the apparent over-intellectuality of Jewish men. In *Legacy of Rage* (2001), a study of Jewish masculinity, Warren Rosenberg introduces Roth's own remark about the features which are considered constitutive of the Jewish male identity. According to Roth, Jewish men are being "appalled by violence", so then when the Jews fight it is not "with raging fists" but "with our words, our brains, with mentality". Rosenberg argues that this stereotype is reflected in Roth's protagonists who nevertheless protest against it:

Does Roth protest too much, with an excess of stylistic ferocity? Even as he makes the case that Jewish men are "sons appalled by violence"
he reveals an anxiety that implies not a rejection of violence but a
humiliation in the face of Jewish male inadequacy: we are “useless” and
“unfit”. That his shame is mixed with pride is precisely the
contemporary Jewish male’s dilemma. We have absorbed the stereotype
that we tend to be more verbal and smarter than other men, but we
frantically resist the implication that we are therefore somehow less
than fully, that we are “all talk” (1).

In the above passage, Rosenberg, who evidently identifies with other Jewish men and
their shared experience, points at the emotional dimension of Roth’s texts, more
precisely he refers to rage, which could be seen as an emotion linked to shame, but
also, notably, to violence. This interdependence between the two affects is discussed
later in the chapter whereas the next section aims to provide more insights into
Jewish shame and how it is manifested in the construction of male protagonists in
Roth’s texts studied here.

Self-hating Jew

Alex Portnoy’s apparent disgust of his own ethnicity appears to be rooted in a larger
struggle of Jewish men with the negative stereotypes about them. The most common
images of Jewish men portray them “as dwarfish, soft, womanish, impotent, a
castrate” or in a less obvious way as “meek husband or dutiful son dominated by the
castrating mother”; according to Susan Bordo (1994) those images haunt Jewish men
today (270).65 One of the theories that greatly contributed to this pejorative imagery

65 More detailed investigation of the negative stereotypes about Jewish body can be found in the work
*The Jew’s Body* (1992) by Sander Gilman. The author provides a long history of the representations of
of Jewish men in the twentieth century, came from the works of Austrian thinker, Otto Weininger. In *Sex and Character* (1903), Weininger argues that Jews are inherently soft and effeminate and that Jewish men possess qualities that are in opposition to those traditionally attributed to masculinity. Works such as those of Weininger, influenced this cultural association of Jewishness with femininity. Weininger states: "[t]he Jewish race [Judentum] is pervasively feminine. The femininity comprises those qualities that I have shown to be in total opposition to masculinity. The Jews are much more feminine than the Aryans . . . and the manliest Jew may be taken for a female" (409). As it was mentioned earlier, Freud’s castration theory also added to the existing images of Jewish men as effeminate. James Penner (2011) remarks that Wieninger’s theories about the nature of Jewish men were “a popular obsession in certain European cultural milieus at the turn of the twentieth century” and they inspired right wing and nationalist circles in many countries gaining popularity in certain circles in American society as well (“Introduction” 12). Roth was most likely affected by the widespread rhetoric of Jewish masculinity at the time of writing *Portnoy’s Complaint*, impacting further on the portrayal of Jewish characters in this but also his later novels. The Rothian narrator manifests an awareness of those debasing images of Jewish men circulating in American society, which he reproduces but, at the same time, undermines by confronting the reader with them. One such example is Portnoy’s following reference to Freud: "Because to be bad, Mother (...) that’s the real struggle; to be bad--and enjoy it! That’s what makes men of us boys, Mother. . . LET’S PUT THE ID BACK

Jewish body as material evidence of the Jew’s “abnormal” nature developed by anti-Semitic thinkers: “In addition to preposterous constructions of the Jew with cloven feet or horns, the circumcised penis of the male Jew supposedly rendered him feminine, syphilitic, or sexually deviant. The stereotypically long, phallic, “Jewish” nose perpetuated these stereotypes, serving as a readily recognizable reminder of the Jew’s altered genitals. These negative constructions of the Jew’s physicality greatly impacted the relationship that Jews had with their own bodies” (qtd. in Gilotta 31, 32)
IN YID!" (PC 124). Putting ‘the id in yid’, may describe the resurfacing of the repressed sexuality of Jewish male sexuality but also, more generally, may represent the return of the repressed Jewish diaspora (here ‘yid’ as a Jew), in particular in post-WWII Jewish American life.

In the literary criticism regarding the Jewish visibility in Roth’s fiction, there seems to be a tendency to bind it primarily with a social and cultural position rather than the construction of male gender. In that mode, Andrea Levine in “Embodying Jewishness at the Millennium” (2011) interprets the hyperbolic ‘Jewish visibility’ in Roth, as an interrogation of racial and national place of Jewish Americans, arguing that these: “denaturalize Jewish American national “belonging” – to begin to consider what a different relationship to national culture and identity might look like for American Jews” (Levine 33). Focusing on Roth’s works as representing merely the social position of the second-generation lower middle-class Jews in America ignores how masculine identity is crucial to his work. It also creates a division between class and gender concerns whereas, it is important to stress, class and gender myths intersect. Baumgarten and Gottfried (1990) highlight how ethnicity in Roth is intrinsically linked to masculinity. In their volume, which provides biographical information as well as clues to possible readings of Roth’s early novels, the authors state: “the nexus of Jewishness and masculinity is crucial, yet paradoxical. Jewishness contributes to what the Rothian hero most respects and yet most loathes in himself - that quality makes him at one and the same time both superior and inferior to what is defined as masculine in America” (83-84). The internalized racism negatively affects Jewish male subjectivity of Roth’s protagonists.
In a recent study of *Portnoy's Complaint*, Bernard Avishai’s *Promiscuous* (2012), this Jewish writer pays surprisingly little attention to the specific racial and class construction of masculinity in Roth, often referring to Portnoy simply as ‘a person’. He discusses the issues of sexuality and erotic desires of Alex Portnoy as related to social and moral mores rather than the specific construction of his Jewish masculinity. The male gender of this Jewish character goes unchallenged in Avishai’s work to the extent that Portnoy is left ‘genderless’. “Portnoy, in other words, spoke so frankly about our arousing parts and sly transgressions (...) that it was hard not to feel a kind of shameless release”, writes Avishai, who, by the utterance of the form ‘we’ stresses how men of his generation strongly identified with Portnoy (33). Without explicitly employing terminology of gender, however, Avishai clearly engages with the politics of masculinity, in particular changes of power balance between men and women initiated by the women’s emancipatory movements of the 1960s. As emerges from Avishai’s interpretation, *Portnoy’s Complaint* was perceived as expressing preoccupation of some men with their changing social status, as becomes apparent from Avishai’s following comment: “turning inward, to a kind of sexual defiance, seemed political all by itself, maybe the only politics left to us” (33). Clearly, in Avishai’s view, the ‘sexual deviance’ in Roth’s novel is as much political as promiscuous and the critic appears enthusiastic about texts such as *Portnoy's Complaint*, which through bluntness, directness and aggressive eroticism, could be seen as giving Jewish-American men ‘their balls’ back (34).

If Avishai had discussed Portnoy’s Jewish masculinity, he would have to touch upon his shame: the Jewish softness, which is a main source of the protagonist’s
distress in his attempts to reassure his manliness by various ‘hardening’ strategies. It seems that ignoring and silencing those vulnerable aspects of Portnoy’s identity by this male critic is symptomatic of certain readings that emerge from what James Penner in *Pinks, Pansies and Punks* refers to as propensity of “masculine domination” (9). Drawing on Penner’s findings, it could be concluded that one of the main characteristics of such a practice would be ignoring such matters relating to male identity, which are viewed as undermining it, to the advantage of those qualities that are viewed as an “external expression of one’s virility”, such as for instance ‘sexual deviance’ described by Avishai (11). Those readings would focus on explicit and often violent erotic content of the texts, as this is also apparent in Avishai’s emphasis on Portnoy’s supposed promiscuity. Such strategies ignore the fact that shamelessness does not translate as the lack of shame but it is merely another face of shame. Even more so for the creative writer for whom shamelessness; “it is, rather, an attitude allowing for the most resolute exploration of an emotion [shame]” (Adamson and Clark 29). Through exposition of what is outwardly perceived as shameless, Roth in fact explores the deep shame of his male protagonist, that shame which cannot be revealed for it is an inseparable part of their identity; it is the abject.

In 2005 interview with Roth, Martin Krasnik asks the writer to reflect on the importance of Jewishness in his works to which Roth provides the following answer:

> It's not a question that interests me. I know exactly what it means to be Jewish, and it's really not interesting. I'm an American. You can't talk about this without walking straight out into horrible clichés that say nothing about human beings. America is first and foremost ... it's my language. And identity labels have nothing to do with how anyone
Roth’s attitude of distancing himself from his ethnic heritage resembles that of Kureishi who, in various interviews, stresses his Englishness while at the same time, he reproduces, in different configurations, images of the South Asian diaspora. It has to be stressed, that most of Roth’s male characters are Jewish and, in one way or another, they refer to their Jewish heritage. Portnoy, in particular, exposes and often makes a big deal of his Jewishness. In Everyman, although the ethnicity does not seem to play a major part in the character’s constitution, at least outwardly, the protagonist’s Jewish background has also been introduced. In the opening scene of Everyman, which is the character’s funeral, significantly the family gathers at a Jewish cemetery, where the protagonist’s parents were also buried (Everyman 1). In the review of Everyman, Stephen Arnoff notes Roth’s characters attempt to distance themselves from their ethnicity by presenting themselves as fully American: “The Jew quite literally becomes an American "everyman" in Roth’s milieu”. Yet, as Arnoff notes, in the area of explicit Jewish content, Roth has also created “The Plot Against the Jews, a nightmare of American and world history in which Jewish continuity, always said to hang by a thin thread, is clipped by the Nazis even in America” (Arnoff 2006 “Everyman” [online]). Arnoff refers to Roth’s novel The Plot Against America published in 2004, only two years before Everyman, which is a fable about fascist America where “Hitler’s allies rule the White House. Anti-Semitic mobs roam the streets. The lower-middle-class Jews of Weequahic, in Newark, N.J., cower in a second-floor apartment, trying to figure out how to use a gun to defend themselves” (Berman, “The Plot Against America” [online]). Considering the
content and the tone of this novel, *Everyman*, which features Jewish characters, appears 'suspiciously' silent about the Jewish matters. Moreover, in the novel, the protagonist distances himself from his Jewishness by emphasizing his indifference to Judaism practised, for instance, by his father. The character admits he had stopped taking religion seriously at the age of thirteen, significantly "the Sunday after the Saturday of his bar mitzvah", a Jewish coming-of-age tradition (*Everyman* 51). In the words that follow this supposed rejection of the Jewish observance, however, the narrator introduces another comment: "There was only our bodies, born to live and die on terms decided by the bodies that had lived and died before" (51). This comment reveals the impossibility of cutting oneself off from one's corporeal heritage and the past of the bodies that lived before: the character points out how bodies, which we do not choose, determine our identity and how, on the other hand, the body is culturally and socially constructed with meanings and symbolism attached to it; such as for instance Jewish but equally male body. A similar message can be traced in Alex Portnoy's sarcastic comment about his physical 'heritage': "there's no escaping destiny, *bubi*, a man's cartilage is his fate (...) Not to mention the Afro-Jewish hairpiece" (*PC* 225). Once again he refers to his Jewish nose and Afro-Jewish hair, which is an allusion to discourse of black masculinity as well.

The subject of the Jewish body in Roth, almost in an instant connects to the subject of shame. Through the specific construction of the characters and narrative style, Roth demonstrates how the negative stereotypes of Jews greatly affect his male character's identity; they equally seem to influence the writer which is apparent in his creative engagement with the subject of shame as oppression, a narrative aesthetics that features also in Hubert Klimko-Dobrzaniecki discussed in the next
chapter. Roth frequently connects his protagonists’ suffering to a larger history of Jewish diaspora, in particular to the shame experienced by the past generations of Jews who were rejected, stigmatized and often persecuted.\footnote{66} He achieves that by making the characters victims of some kind of oppression, also as oppressive obsession, and by constant allusions to events and places related to the suffering of Jews. The European Holocaust is a recurrent subject in Portnoy’s house as a constant reminder of what happened in the Europe of the Second World War. The emerging 1990’s studies on survivors’ guilt and second generation trauma, enabled a greater understanding of how trauma of the Holocaust is being passed onto successive generations of Jews, who although did not participate directly in the events can experience some of that trauma too.\footnote{67} In Portnoy’s Complaint, Alex’s sister reminds the protagonist: “Do you know (…), where you would be now if you had been born in Europe instead of America? (…) Dead. Gassed, or shot, or incinerated, or butchered, or buried alive” (PC 77). Alex’s ironic response “I suppose the Nazis are an excuse for everything that happens in this house!” demonstrates the impossibility of denying the tragic history of Jews as well as its shadowy presence in the everyday life of Portnoys’ family. Yet, behind those references to the Second World War and the Holocaust is awareness of the imagery of Jews as a hated and rejected race, which provoked their mass killings in the first place.

\footnote{66} For the interrogation of the evolution and spread of negative imagery of Jews, which as many argue, culminated in the event of the Holocaust see Roberto Finzi Anti-Semitism: From Its European Roots to the Holocaust (1999), or A Convenient Hatred: The History of Antisemitism (2012) by Phyllis Goldstein. A study of Matthew Biberman, Masculinity, Anti-semitism, and Early Modern English Literature: From the Satanic to the Effeminate Jew (2004) demonstrates the persistence of certain myths about Jewish men through centuries immortalized in various representations in Early Modern English literature.

\footnote{67} Ruth Leys provides an overview of the most significant works in the subjects, such as Primo Levi’s memoir Survival in Auschwitz (1996), in her book From Guilt to Shame: Auschwitz and After (2009).
In his study *On Shame* (2008), Michael Morgan writes about a type of shame experienced by some Jewish people, known as “Jewish self-hatred”, which is evoked by the confrontation with anti-Semitic attitudes. In Morgan’s view, such shame is offensive and misplaced and should be condemned as shameful since according to the philosopher “feeling ill about oneself for having features that one should not be ashamed of having, whether one has them or not, is itself worthy of shame” (Morgan 24). In Morgan’s view, the shame of being a Jew becomes an abject; a paradoxical, because irresolvable, situation of being ashamed of feeling shame. This situation, nonetheless, may force a person who feels shame to revisit the judgments of others about himself or herself and may change circumstances which gave rise to shame in the first place. It seems this is what Roth does when he refers to Jewish history and common stereotypes about Jews. The frequently recalled images are likely to evoke shame in the reader – that shame which we experience when faced with others being humiliated and diminished – forcing the reader to assess his or her own prejudices.

In a 1969 review of *Portnoy’s Complaint*, Gregg Kilday refers to Roth’s portrayal of Alex as representing the “archetypal American male Jew”, although the reviewer adds that Roth’s treatment of the American Jew has always been “relentlessly comic” (Kilday, “Portnoy’s Complaint”). At the time of *Portnoy’s Complaint*’s publication, Roth had published *Goodbye Columbus* (1959) and *Letting Go* (1962), which seemed to upset Jewish communities by what they perceived as a demeaning portrayal of the Jewish psyche and customs. Kilday’s remark about the comic element in representations of Jews in Roth most likely relates to the writer’s caricatured images: indeed, in Roth, Jewishness frequently appears reduced to fear of pork “because it can kill you”, circumcised penis, hooked nose and other features, in
his view, indicative of Jewish physique. Alex Portnoy obsesses not merely about his
own nose – as when he comments on a Jewish girl “she rashly turned up her long
Jewish nose” – but the Jewish nose becomes that ‘thing’ which marks out the entire
Jewish race: “To them [American Chinese], we’re just some big-nosed variety of
WASP” (PC 90, 91). In such comments, Roth engages with the racial discourses on
Jewishness, but equally, Americanness. Considering Roth’s answer to Martin
Krasnik, the question remains what is the writer’s purpose in the repetitive
construction of characters who are Jewish and whose ethnic make-up is superficial if
not ridiculous. In other words, with regard to Jewish ethnicity and the ways in which
it shapes Roth’s characters identities as different to that of Americans, one may ask
after Kingsley Amis “WHAT’S SO DIFFERENT WITH THE GOYIM?” (author’s
emphasis, 105”). 68 As evident from the emphasis, this literary critic demonstrates a
kind of irritation at Roth’s separation of Jewish and American experience. A kind of
answer to Amis question is provided by Baumgarten and Gottfried (1990) who,
consciously or not, tie Jewish masculinity in Roth’s works to shame by describing
Roth’s characters as ridden by the feelings of self-loathing, inferiority and
superiority; hence using the language of shame (84).

68 ‘Goyim’ refers to a non-Jew and is a somewhat demeaning name; in Portnoy’s vocabulary, adapted
by Amis, goyim refers to Americans. Amis questions Alex Portnoy’s (Roth’s) rage at Jewish parents’
educational methods, arguing that they are not specific to merely Jewish but to any parents: “In
Western society, and probably in a lot of other societies, past and present, people constantly try to
straightjacket their children to be as they want, use guilt feelings on them” etc. Amis continues
referring to Portnoy as Roth “Portnoy, or Mr Roth, falls into racial/cultural provincialism by
wondering what it is about specifically Jewish parents that makes them go on like this; they are just
parents...” (105).
Jewish American men and *shikses*

At the first glance, Alex Portnoy appears a sexual predator. He is obsessed with *shikses*, as he refers to the American girls, forbidden because they are not Jewish, and his sexual desire for them seems insatiable: "how do they get so gorgeous, so healthy, so blond?" (Roth’s emphasis, *PC* 143). Yet, Alex’s interest in them does not seem dictated by their "exotic allure" or even rebelliousness against his parents who want him to pursue Jewish girls, but what the *shikses* represent, that is America. Alex makes a confession to Dr Spielvogel: "I don’t seem to stick my dick up these girls, as much as I stick it up their backgrounds – as though through fucking I will discover America. *Conquer* America-maybe that’s more like it" (Roth’s emphasis, *PC* 235).

For Alex *shikses* appear a medium of securing his belonging into that desirable other: America, embodied in “engaging, good-natured, confident, clean, swift” people which he contrasts with Jewish people: “don’t tell me we’re just as good as anybody else, don’t tell me we’re Americans just like they are” (*PC* 146). Alex emphasizes how American citizens are imagined as clean and healthy and, thus how Americaniness becomes a superior ideal he wants to pursue. The desire for this ideal, however, is mixed with resentment manifested in the sarcasm detected in Alex’s reflections on American ‘perfectness’.

Referring to images of women in Roth’s novels, Susan Bordo (1994) remarks how women may become an instrument of the struggle to achieve the desirable ideal: “In Roth’s novels (...) various male personae identify the achievement of “American” masculinity with winning the prize female icon of the culture: the blond-haired, blue-eyed *shiksa*” (270). According to Bordo this should be viewed as a male strategy of empowerment – seen among others in Alex’s fixation on the word *shikse*
itself – that resonates with issues in the sexual politics of African-American culture, as well. In the similar way, Alex is “continuously drawn away from a culturally sanctioned Jewish cuisine by the lures of American junk food” for dietary practices are psychologically connected to sexual mores, observes Gilotta (31). Alex’s strategy becomes apparent when he reveals the actual resentment towards the American girls he dates, an emotion restraining him from developing any deeper feelings towards them: “...there could never be any “love” in me for The Pilgrim [one of nicknames used by Alex for a girl he dates]. Intolerant of her frailties. Jealous of her accomplishments. Resentful of her family.” (PC 240). The resentment of the girl’s family reveals a sense of inferiority not only due to his Jewish difference but also due to class positioning conditioned by his ethnic belonging. Alex’s subjectivity is composed of two separate cultures, which equally disturbs and constitutes his identity and this separateness is emphasized by the protagonist on several occasions. For instance, when he fantasizes about a newspaper’s headline after supposed suffocation of his American ‘girlfriend’ during oral sex, he imagines himself to be referred as a ‘Jew’; “JEW SMOTHERS DEB WITH COCK” (original emphasis, 240). Apart from reinstating himself as a Jew, this sentence expresses Alex’s fantasy of a hard, violent male: the Jew may be ‘soft’ but his penis can be a weapon of violence.

David Tenenbaum (2006), who similarly to Bordo investigates the problem of the failed relationship of Roth’s Jewish characters with gentile American women suggests that the problem at the heart of it is, in fact, shame. In “Race, Class and Shame in the Fiction of Philip Roth”, he writes that in his consecutive works, such as My Life as a Man, The Human Stain and Portnoy’s Complaint, Roth portrays...
characters who attempt to "escape the emasculating shame of their Jewish identity through their relationship with one of the many embodiments of his late wife, Margaret Martinson Williams" (35). The struggle to overcome the perceived sense of cultural inferiority leads the characters to set a personal ideal they attempt to achieve through relationships with the other, gentile American women, who they believe embody the opposite qualities to the ones they try to escape. However, when they discover the faults in the other, this paradoxically reasserts their shame when they realize their own superiority over that desired other. Such a situation occurs in Alex Portnoy's relationship with Mary Jane Reed, who Alex refers to as 'The Monkey', and whom he perceives as intellectually inferior: "how can I go on and on with someone whose reason and judgment and behavior I can't possibly respect" (PC 214). Alex admits to self-disgust at this realization and attempts to educate her into proper behaviour by his "sermons". Yet, using Tenenbaum's words, his attitude towards the girl is motivated by "his humiliation at her childlike intellect (...) in attempting to change The Monkey to fit his own cultural values, Alex reasserts the shame that forces his parents to identify their own superiority" (38).

Some of Portnoy's predatory attitude towards women echoes through Everyman as well. The novel's narrator recalls the adulterous relationships of the, now dead, protagonist with his secretary, a "dark-haired young woman of nineteen". The narrator exposes further the intimate details of the protagonist's encounter with this woman who "within two weeks of taking the job, was kneeling on his office floor with her ass raised" while he was "fucking her fully clothed, with just his fly unzipped" (Everyman 108). The relationship pattern described by Tenenbaum with regard to Portnoy, appears valid also in the case of Everyman's marriage with
Merete, the protagonist's third wife. The marriage happened so soon the protagonist admits to learning about the 'real nature' of the woman he had married, only after the marriage:

It was not long afterward that he discovered that Merete was something more than that little hole, or perhaps something less. He discovered her inability to think anything through without all her uncertainties intruding and skewing her thought. (...) he was a little late in learning that all her boldness was encompassed in her eroticism and that her carrying everything erotic between them to the limit was their only empowering affinity (Everyman 124).

According to the narrator, the relationship with Merete “had been founded on boundless desire” for a woman with whom the protagonist “had no business with but a desire that never lost its power to blind him and lead him, at fifty, to play a young man’s game.” (Everyman 96). It seems that particularly this treatment of women as sexual objects in Roth’s fiction contributed to the opinion of the writer’s work as expressing sexist and misogynist attitude. A number of feminist writers have accused Roth of hatred of women for “unsympathetically, reducing them to objects, or as instrument of male pleasure” (Avishai 81). David Brauner (2007) argues Portnoy’s Complaint, with Alex’s statements about women, such as “They all have cunts! Cunts – for fucking”, contributed to that perception that “Roth is at best sexist, at worst misogynist”. As Brauner stresses however, to condemn the novel in these terms is “rather parochial, and possibly tendentious” (51). As was the case with Kureishi’s character in Intimacy, Roth’s characters’ attitude towards women deserves a more profound investigation, where specific gender and ethnic constitution of the
characters is also being taken into consideration. In addition, in his comment about conquering America through sleeping with American girls, Alex ties his sexual and gendered identity to ideology of national citizenship.

It could be argued that this character’s sexual activity with women is one of the ways of achieving the ideal of masculinity founded on the compulsory heterosexuality. In *The Passing Game: Queering Jewish American Culture*, Warren Hoffman (2009) argues that *Portnoy’s Complaint*’s misogynistic tone gains new understanding when approached through the perspective of queering. In this context, Portnoy’s hyper-sexual performance is a way of reassuring his heterosexuality with women serving as “the ultimate object to be attained as well as denigrated” (120). The reduction of women to ‘cunts’ exemplifies what Judith Butler (1990) calls a ‘heterosexual matrix’, further described by Hoffman as reinforcing one’s gender role “via sexual performance” which upholds the normalization of heterosexuality: “Portnoy must be heterosexual as it is the only way for him to reassert his American identity” (121). As Hoffman stresses, queer identities are viewed as a threat to the dominant model of sexuality viewed as ‘natural’; that is to heterosexual matrix in American context (5).

In “Masculinity as Homophobia” (2008), the American sociologist Michael Kimmel argues that the constitutive principle of this definition of manhood is homophobia (103). Homophobia, explains Kimmel, should not be understood simply as the fear of gay men, but as the fear of what is associated with homosexuality that is the sissy, the soft and weak:

[h]omophobia is the fear that other men will unmask us, emasculate us, reveal to us and the world that we do not measure up, that we are not
real men. We are afraid to let other men see that fear. Fear makes us ashamed, because the recognition of fear in ourselves is proof to ourselves that we are not as manly as we pretend, that we are, like the young man in poem by Yeats, “one that ruffles in a many pose for all his timid heart”. Our fear is the fear of humiliation. We are ashamed to be afraid” (Kimmel 104).

In sum, homophobia is a fear of being exposed as unmanly. Being a man, argues Kimmel, is marked by the fear and shame of fear which in itself occurs as a paradoxical state. Kimmel’s findings about the American cultural model of masculinity are reinforced by sociological and psychological research on men. Psychologist Thomas J. Scheff (2007) writes that while socialized into gender roles “most men learn early that emotions other that anger are not considered manly” (8). Therefore, anger and aggressive behaviours – also passive aggressive behaviour, such as hostility or misogyny – are a common strategy to ‘man up’ since, as Kimmel stresses, “violence is often the single most evident marker of manhood” (104). Men’s fear of other men, who can unmask them as unmanly leads to the situation where all their efforts go to confirming and maintaining the manly façade: “The fear of being perceived (...) as not a real man, keeps men exaggerating all the traditional rules of masculinity, including sexual predation with women” (105).69 The penis comes as a shadow of the phallus: to catch up with its symbolic ideal it needs to possess and conquer other women. The next section analyses images of the penis in Roth’s texts, considering their potential to provide insights into the foundations of male gender.

69 The spectre of shame at being considered ‘a pussy’, explains Kimmel, leads to men’s silence when faced with a racist or sexist joke, or even when witnessing abuse of women, minorities or gays, which infrequently keep people believing men actually approve of those things (4).
"The superabundance of cock in Roth"

In his 1969 essay “In Slightly Different Form”, Kingsley Amis discusses *Portnoy’s Complaint*’s shamelessness, which the critic ascribes mainly to the author’s ‘uninhibitedness’, apparent not as much in the descriptions of juvenile masturbation of which account he finds “in more profuse detail, and more honestly than in any other book”, as in the fact that Portnoy “has girls” (106). The portrayal of Portnoy’s encounters with other women, evidence of “showing off” according to Amis, are highly embarrassing, whereas the very style of the narrative “straight-to-audience, tape-recording, person-to-person” only intensifies the feeling of embarrassment in the reader, observes Amis (106).  

Maurice Charney notices quite the opposite, namely, the ‘healing’ effect of the text: “It is the wildness of *Portnoy’s Complaint* that has endeared this book to so many readers, who participate in the frenzied and compulsive barrage of sex and aggression. The book offers release for our own bottled guilts about dirty words, masturbation, racial prejudices and other censored materials of the fantasy life” (qtd.in Avishai 162). Although both critics are in agreement about that quality of the narrative which provokes emotional responses in readers – Charney when he talks about readers’ “participation” in Portnoy’s aggressive obsessions and Amis when he refers to the feeling of embarrassment during the process of reading – neither of them seem to be puzzled as to what is the purpose of Alex’s confession ‘overloaded’ with perverse and degrading images. Roth himself takes a stand with regard to this, admitting that the purpose of such blunt

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70 In *Trials of the Diaspora, A History of Anti-Semitism in England* (2010), Anthony Julius introduces Amis’ comments regarding Jews, which he sees as an expression of Amis’ prejudice against them. Amis had to say: "I’ve finally worked out why I don’t like Americans ... Because everyone there is either a Jew or a hick" or "The great Jewish vice is glibness, fluency ... also possibly just bullshit, as in Marx, Freud, Marcuse" (358). Curiously, the cover of this book features the recommending remark: “an essential history” by Philip Roth.
sexual confessions was not purely literary: "[Portnoy] is obscene because he wants to be saved... [His] pains arise out of his refusal to be bound any longer by taboos which, rightly or wrongly, he experiences as diminishing and unmanning. The joke on Portnoy is that for him breaking the taboo turns out to be as unmanning in the end as honoring it" (Avishai 26).

The narration in Everyman centres on the main protagonist's gradual aging and weakening of his body, which can be seen as a journey toward an ultimate impotence. The character feels humiliated by the loss of strength: "It was only Nancy [his daughter], but he felt humiliated nonetheless by the confession: - I have lost the confidence for the surf" (107). Power and confidence are frequently discussed here in terms of sexual prowess, whereas aging is equated with losing it. In one of the scenes, a nearly 70-years-old protagonist meets a young woman jogging in the park. His registering of the woman's qualities concentrates on a description of her body, the object of his desire: "tanned" belly, "round and firm" buttocks and "substantial" breasts (132). Aroused by the woman's body, by "the urge to touch", and "the craving for just one such body" he felt himself "growing hard in his pants unbelievably, magically quickly, as though he were fifteen". His attempt to announce his interest to the woman is preceded by a sudden flush of anxiety and loss of confidence: "Thirty years ago he wouldn't have doubted the result of pursuing her, young as she was, and the possibility of humiliating rejection would never have occurred to him" (133). The character's portrayal of the woman embodies male heterosexual gaze; that is seeing women in purely sexual terms. He reaffirms his heterosexuality, but equally potency, by describing his erection. The character elaborates further on the sensation: "And feeling, too, that sharp sense of
individualization, of sublime singularity, that marks a fresh sexual encounter or love affair and that is the opposite of the deadening depersonalization of serious illness” (134). A sexual desire, but most importantly, an erection is received by the character as a liberating and empowering force. The character frequently returns with a great nostalgia to the past times when he could pursue women and ‘perform’ sex without the fear of failing:

He’d had all the attention from women he could have wanted; from the time he’d entered the art school it never stopped. It seemed as though he were destined for nothing else. But then something unforeseen happened (...) He neither possessed man’s male allure nor was capable of germinating the masculine joys, and he tried not to long for them too much (160, 161).

The experience of the ageing process is described by the protagonist as “impotently putting up with the physical deterioration and the terminal sadness” (161). Old age makes you impotent because you are helpless and powerless when it comes to getting old but also because it reduces your abilities to perform sex.

In Everyman, similarly to Portnoy’s Complaint, the writer introduces a character whose age, background and biographical details resemble that of his own: Roth, like the novel’s ‘everyman’, was born in 1933 in New Jersey to Jewish parents. It is hard not to notice that, since Portnoy’s Complaint, the main protagonist has aged together with the author. The writer’s technique of blurring the borders between fiction and autobiography, a narrative device found in two other authors of this study, complicates readers’ positioning and emotional engagement with regard to Roth’s characters. Brauner observes that the identification of Roth with Portnoy for instance,
"underpinned much of the hostile criticism directed at the novel and its author..." (48). By suggesting the connection between protagonists and his own experience, Roth must have anticipated that a part of a potential critique and condemnation of his characters’ misogynistic, sexist or obscene behaviour would be directed at him. A writer Liel Leibovitz (2011), in a somewhat sarcastic comment, sums up this tendency of indicating a direct relationship between the fictional character and the writer in Roth’s novels: “you’d be lucky to see much past New Jersey. That is because Roth’s primary preoccupation is Roth” (2). More precisely, the writer’s greatest obsession, argues the reviewer, is talking about “his own dick” since “the superabundance of cock in Roth’s work is more than a stylistic choice aiming to shock and unnerve. (...) It is his primary state of mind” (Leibovitz 2). A drawing by David Levine appears to embody this opinion about the writer: it features a penis, the ‘head’ of which is replaced by the head of Philip Roth (see Appendix 2).

“Why the emphasis on size? Why this continual exaggeration? Why the focus on erection?” asks Sam Keen in Fire in the Belly (1992), about the condition of manhood in America. Keen, who confronts traditional and common rites of passage that, in his view, alienate or even injure men, gives two possible answers to those questions. The first, simplistic one, which represents the main preconception which Keen fights in his book, is that “men are horny to the core”. The author expands on more elaborate but also difficult answers, which explains that men’s focus on erection is “a compensation for our feelings that the penis, and therefore the self, is

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71 David Foster Wallace discusses Roth’s contemporary John Updike in similar terms. In the collection of essays Consider the Lobster (2005), Wallace observes that for many decades Updike has been constructing protagonists “who are basically all the same guy”. He points at the tendentious structure of his works revolving around the same matters: naked women’s bodies, sex and penis. Referring to Toward the End of Time – which links thematically to Everyman and Roth’s idea of Life and Death of The Male Body – Wallace observes: “Updike makes it plain that he views the narrator’s final impotence as catastrophic, as the ultimate symbol of death itself, and he clearly wants us to mourn it” (xvii).
small, unreliable, and shamefully out of control” (Keen 70). Seen through the perspective introduced by Keen, Roth’s exhibitionistic tendency to ‘show’ the penis can be viewed as shameless, yet, at the same time, the writer exposes the penis, to borrow Keen’s phrase, as ‘shamefully out of control’. Since we do not have access to Roth’s state of mind let us analyze the images of penis in Roth, with a particular focus on the two novels discussed in this chapter.

Looking at the images of the penis in texts such as Portnoy’s Complaint and Everyman, but also the aforementioned The Human Stain, it is surprising that Roth has gained opinion as “American literature’s premier high-brow pornographer, an exuberant celebrator of masturbation, whoring, adultery, threesomes, orgies, and outré sexual experimentation”, since the penis in Roth is not always hard (Heer 2008 “Performance Problems in Philip Roth’s Fiction” [online]). In his blog entry Jeet Heer points at the frequency with which impotence shows up in Roth’s novels.

In Letting Go (1962), Paul Herz becomes impotent during the course of a wretched marriage. Portnoy is similarly diminished at the end of his long-winded complaint: not eyeless in Gaza but impotent in Israel. In The Counterlife (1986) Zuckerman’s brother is given heart medicine which destroys his sexual powers. And Zuckerman’s own impotence was first alluded to in The Human Stain (2000) before becoming a major component of the latest novel [Everyman] (Heer 2008 “Performance Problems in Philip Roth’s Fiction” [online]).

Impotent in Israel refers to Alex Portnoy’s visit to Israel where during his encounter with an Israeli woman, who is also a soldier, he cannot perform intercourse. According to David Brauner, the fact that Portnoy shares his impotent act with an
Israeli soldier, to which Brauner refers as a “mock-trial”, is symptomatic of Roth’s narrative style, which he describes as a movement from “the familiar narrative of the priapic misogynist (...) to the counter-narrative of the humiliated schlemiel” (52). Thanks to this strategy, Roth’s characters are deprived of real power to criticize or insult women since they themselves appear failed as men. Moreover, the movement from “misogynist” to “humiliated schlemiel” could be interpreted as the embodiment of Roth characters’ struggle with conflicting ideals of masculinity where the first, misogynist, is associated with aggression, thus hardness, while the latter expresses disempowerment, thus softness.

The abundance of penis in Roth’s novels indeed can be viewed as comic and ironic rather than phallocentric since the images of penis often occur to mock, ridicule or undermine the protagonist’s potency as the embodiment of their phallic power. This is apparent when, for instance, Alex Portnoy comments on the power balance in his family. The mother, Sophie Portnoy, is the one “scolding, correcting, reproving, criticizing, fault finding without end!”. Alex realizes that she replaced a man and has authority in the house for he sums up “what a mix-up of the sexes in our house!” (PC 41). Significantly, in Alex’s words, the mother is “filling in the patriarchal vacuum!” as if Alex was proclaiming the end of patriarchy, understood as domination of men over women (42). The response to this thought is the rapid shift in the narrative to his father’s penis, the large size of which, in Alex’s view, saves the father’s honour as a man:

Pregnable (putting it mildly) as his masculinity was in this world of
goyim with golden hair and silver tongues, between his legs (God bless my father!) he was constructed like a man of consequence, two big
healthy balls such as a king would be prod to put on display, and a shlong of magisterial length and girth (PC 42).

Overtly, Alex presents the father’s penis as the core and ultimate bastion of virility in the light of his presumed emasculation by the overbearing wife. Other features ascribed as manly, together with men’s privileges of power, domination, their role as patriarchs, can be taken away from men, but testicles are constant, the proof of manliness, the ‘thing’ no woman can ever achieve. However, in the context introduced by Alex, the father’s penis is being ridiculed for it is completely deprived of its phallic power and remains merely a body member. The later statement resonates in Alex’s comment about his father’s oldest brother, who Alex sees as a “potent man in the family” judging not by the size of his penis but because of the position he holds in the public and private sphere alike, namely as “successful in business” and “tyrannical at home” (PC 51). Therefore, it can be concluded that in Portnoy’s Complaint, the narrator’s depiction of the penis as the essence of virility and male honour is subversive and indeed, ironic, although through this image Roth evidently engages with the discourse of phallocentrism.

Susan Bordo’s (1994) ideas of a relationship between the phallus and penis expressed in her “Reading of the Male Body” are instructive here. Bordo considers this relationship in terms of the tension within the construct of masculinity itself, especially in the fact, that “the phallus is haunted by the penis” (266). Phallus, in Western “phallocentric” imagination, represents male power and domination but cannot be equated with the penis, argues Bordo: “[F]or actual men are not timeless symbolic constructs, they are biologically, historically, and experientially embodied beings; the singular, constant, transcendent rule of the phallus is continually
challenged by this embodiment" (265). Ironically, as Bordo notes, the penis is "the most visibly mutable of body parts", "temperamental" and "unpredictable", the very reason that the penis, outside the homoerotic representations, "remains private and protected territory", according to the scholar.72

Not all men, however, are permitted to keep their penises to themselves. Instead, they are required to play the cultural shadow to the phallus; that shadow is always some possibility felt to be harboured by the male body and threatening to its masculine stature and status, whether it be the softness and vulnerability shared with the feminine body or the instinctual urges shared with the animal body (269).

The penis as described by Bordo provides a constant opportunity for shame because it exposes men as having no control over the part of their body considered a core of their virility and a ‘tool’ of sexual performance. This reduction of penis to merely a tool, as Bordo remarks, is due to a perception of sexual potency purely in terms of phallic potency and strength, dismissing the fact that the penis is not inseparable from and responds to the feelings of its owner. In The Abject Objects: Avatars of the Phallus (2006), Keith Reader, who uses Lacanian psychoanalysis to explore the relationship between symbolism of the phallus and its biological embodiment, penis, arrives at a similar conclusion stating that phallus at once “speaks to masculinity and undermines its claims to supremacy”. Furthermore, Reader sums up that masculinity, which is the ostensible domain of the phallus “inexorably dwells under the sign of its own abjection” (“Introduction” 2). The penis provides a constant threat to

72 Bordo continues on the subject: “Indeed, the penis – insofar as it is capable of being soft as well as hard, injured as well as injuring, helpless as well as proud, emotionally needy as well as cold with will, insofar as it is vulnerable, perishable body – haunts the phallus, threatens its undoing. Patriarchal culture generally wants it out of sight" (267-8).
masculinity for although it can reassure one's manliness it can equally undermine it. This may be one of the reasons why the penis remains hidden, as argued earlier in the study by Maxine Sheets-Johnstone (1992), who in "Corporeal Archetypes and Power" points out that the penis "remains shrouded in mystery. It is protected, hidden from sight" (69). The images of penis in Roth appear inscribed in this rhetoric.

Arguably, the penis appears the most suitable 'device' to illustrate the soft/hard conflict within masculine construction, for it is a physical embodiment of both qualities. The erect penis represents phallic power and strength whereas the flaccid penis is associated with the feminine and vulnerable. At first glance, Portnoy's Complaint and Everyman can be regarded as corresponding to those two extremes. The first portrays a young character subjected to his sexual urges, with his penis alerted and erect for most of the time yet, without the character's control over his urges, thus exposing him as animal-like. This blending of animal and human is most evident in the scene of Alex's masturbation with a liver, where the part of the animal body symbolically merges with the male body in a sexual act (PC 133).

Everyman, on the other hand, depicts a man who loses control over his sexual parts due to the gradual decay of his body with the main character exposed as frightened, vulnerable and thus soft. Looking at the tendency of the writer to focus on the male organ, Chris Cox concludes: "as with Roth's recent novels, in which elderly protagonists rage against their dwindling virility (...), Portnoy's Complaint asserts that to be sexual is to be fully alive – while to have that denied is a form of living death" (Cox 2009 "Portnoy's Complaint – still shocking at 40" [online]). Although Everyman's protagonist is in fact dead, what seems to be Portnoy's legacy is the rage
displayed by the protagonist at various occasions. Rage may be considered a manly emotion; equally a certain type of writing can be viewed as a way of reassuring manliness, discussed in the section that follows.

Writing shame

Most of relationships in Roth's novels are failed, becoming examples of how men and women make each other miserable. The writer portrays the worlds of men and women as separate experiences often making intimacy between them impossible. At the same time, the male characters at the centre of these stories express the need for closeness, acceptance and admiration. With regard to intimacy, or rather the impossibility of achieving intimacy with women, Roth appears to have a similar approach to that of Hanif Kureishi discussed in the previous chapter, where the relationship between intimacy and shame was also introduced. What seems to disturb them in achieving that kind of relationship is their idea of a hard man frequently understood as a predator reassuring his manliness through sexual encounters with women. In Everyman, the protagonist confesses how he longs for intimacy with his wife Phoebe, a woman he loves, yet, similarly to Jay, he is reluctant to reveal his fears so as not to expose himself as vulnerable. During the walks along the shore, he finds himself filled with an unknown fear, which he nonetheless could not admit to his wife Phoebe who accompanied him: "he could not understand where the fear was coming from and had to use all his strength to conceal it from Phoebe" (Everyman 30). He perceives this inability to share as bringing his marriage to an end and forcing him to look "elsewhere for the intimacy" (Everyman 31). The above excerpt exposes this male character as lonely in his fear precisely because of the shame of
feeling fear and fear of sharing it. Men are ashamed of feeling fear which exposes them as unmanly in front of women, and in front of other men. In fact, the protagonist confesses that admitting his weakness or indeed his failures appears such an impossible task that his consecutive marriages were not a result of new affection but merely a strategy of covering up the previous sins and failures that provide a source of shame: “because he did not know what else to do to make sense of what had happened or how else to appear responsible – and to rehabilitate himself particularly in Nancy’s eyes – a few months later he married Merete. (...) marrying her had seemed the simplest way to cover up the crime” (Everyman 123). A feeling of helplessness is later dramatized by the confession of meaninglessness of those marriages and the protagonist’s terrible loneliness for “there was no woman in his life other than his daughter” (93). On the other hand, women are also viewed as providing an important source of strength to the protagonist. Only when faced with losing his mother, the protagonist realizes that the devotion of his mother, and equally his wife Phoebe, “had been the underpinning of his strength” (119). A man without women, Roth’s protagonist seem to be saying, is a much less potent man, not only in terms of strength but also sexually.

Writing seen as a kind of performance can defend the physical impotence in men, since, as it was pointed by James Penner, masculine identity is linked to the act of writing. In his review of Everyman, Stephen Hazan Arnoff refers to Roth’s productivity as a “large body of work”, using a kind of phallic metaphor (Arnoff 2006 “Live By No Man’s Code: The Religious Forms of Philip Roth's "Everyman" [online]). It can be argued that certain types or styles of writing can be viewed as ‘manly’ too. In the study Philip Roth's Rude Truth (2006), Ross Posnock observes
rudeness and rage as predominant emotions inscribed in a number of Roth’s works (Preface xvii). Kingsley Amis (1969) makes a similar remark about Portnoy’s Complaint stating that its entire narrative is driven by the emotion of rage: “rage that is nonetheless rage for being presented as often excessive and ridiculous” (103). He sees the whole text as being constructed of enraging things “well selected and observed”, apparent in the portrayal of the mother in particular but equally in the emotive language used throughout the text: “these things (...) are instant springboards for Alex’s rages, for another rash of exclamation marks, italics, and block letters” (Amis 104). Rage belongs to the group of emotions that can mask shame and also, similarly to aggression and violence, the one that may create an illusion of being powerful and in control.

The often outrageous tone is inscribed also in the narrative style of Everyman. Everyman’s feelings of remorse are intertwined with the moments of rage and frustration at being judged – perhaps not so much by others, as indeed by himself when he applies the perceived judgment of the others. The protagonist lists how his sons perceived him as “underhanded, irresponsible, frivolously immature sexual adventurer”, how they made him shrink, for they “minimized his decency, then magnify his defects (...) minimizing everything worthwhile” making their father suffer: “and so he did, investing them with power” (96). The narrative in which he gives himself up to powerlessness is followed by a sudden change of tone, with the character giving vent to his remorse and frustration: “You wicked bastards! You sulky fuckers! You condemning little shits!” (97). The vulgarity and aggression appear means to regain some of the lost power in what he perceives as shaming practices of his sons. From the passage about the protagonist’s relationship with his
sons it becomes evident how shame relates to power, or rather, how successful
shaming deprives one of power. Shaming does not have to result in a person feeling
ashamed, however, as it seems it does for Everyman since he feels diminished,
referring to this sensation as shrinking; thus, indicating the feeling of shame. In
addition, the protagonist appears diminished by his own passivity, not being able to
act or react to his sons' shaming. As Michael Morgan (2008) argues, shame is the
emotion that provokes self-assessment (54). This is indeed evident in Everyman,
who, when confronted with his sons' judgment, reflects on his behaviour as a father
and a husband.

Arguably, confessional writing provides the most suitable mode of self-
examination. In Male Confessions (2010), Bjorn Krondorfer argues that what makes
a text confessional is a certain intensity and "sincerity in the search for authenticity
without shying away from exposing layers of intimacy to the public". The confessant
attempts to investigate himself in an introspective and retrospective way, what is
triggered by "some rapture in his life and followed by a transformative experience"
(Krondorfer 10). The presence of the element of self-examination in front of some
other, in this case, the reader, leads Krondofer to a conclusion that confessional
writing originates from religious imaginings and writing. This can certainly be true
for Everyman, the title of the 15th century English morality play called The
Summoning of Everyman. In this allegorical story very much ingrained in the
Christian tradition, Everyman, who represents all mankind, examines his life and the
question of salvation. Although Roth's text is deprived of the religious tone with the
character reassuring the reader of his atheism, Roth evidently suggests parallels
between his novel and the medieval play, in particular in terms of confession. Roth
emphasizes that his 'everyman' is not intended to be a universal or allegorical figure; rather the character’s namelessness points at the fact he is defined by the matrix of relationships with others. He is his parents’ child, his sons’ father, his wife’s husband: “that is how we are defined” adds Roth (“Philip Roth Discusses 'Everyman”’, radio broadcast). Pointing at the relationship with others as a factor determining one’s identity is significant for it assumes the knowledge of the expectations of others, but also the desire for recognition and constant attempts to measure up to the standards set by others.

Krondorfer suggests that confessional writing, a type of writing in itself that was long exclusively a male domain, appeals to men as it offers at once a sense of risk and control. Disclosing the intimate self in written form lacks the element of unpredictability that is present in direct encounters. Hence, writing makes it possible to shape and control self-exposure and to maintain command over what content is revealed and what remains hidden. At the same time, revealing secrets can be perceived as advantageous, or even, dangerously exciting for the writer, precisely because it exposes him to the ‘out of control’ possibility of readers’ critique or condemnation. Most importantly, with regard to the construction of masculinity, confessional writing opens up the possibility of questioning what is perceived as normative masculinity, or it can be used as a critique of hegemonic masculinity creating “alternative spaces for men to reveal something about the variety of their intimate lives, of the complexity of motives, and of the embarrassment of clandestine deeds and thoughts” (Krondorfer 5). The protagonist in Everyman is filled with resentment and guilt at the thought of losing his wife by cheating on her “if only Phoebe [his ex-wife] were with him now (...) if only he hadn’t wounded Phoebe the
way that he had, if only he hadn't wronged her, if only he hadn't lied!” (108).

Considering that the entire narrative of Everyman is underpinned by the feeling of remorse, the character's biggest shame seems to be the shame of becoming a man he did not want to be. What adds to the character's physical pains and humiliation of being “diminished into someone he did not want to be” is the overwhelming feeling of guilt and remorse “for all his mistakes – all the ineradicable, stupid, inescapable mistakes” (Everyman 158).

Conclusion

In the works of Roth discussed in this chapter, male characters may appear promiscuous, misogynist or sexist, yet they never feel confident about their deeds, but rather guilty and ashamed. In fact, their actions and decisions seem to be dictated by shame. This shame, as this chapter was intending to demonstrate, has its source in a construction of masculinity itself, which demands of men a constant need to prove their manliness. Both Portnoy's Complaint and Everyman's main protagonists represent a certain generation of men; those who were shaped by the patriarchal values of their fathers but equally were submerged by the reality of emancipatory movements and discourses such as feminism, which promoted equality of men and women in public and in private domain. Since historically masculinity has been assigned the role of dominating sex, the qualities attached to the ideal of a man are those associated with power, authority and control. Although the feminist movements of the 1960s contributed to the interrogations of male hegemony and to revisions of hegemonic pattern of hard masculinity, the heterosexual, hard masculinity is a model socially and culturally reinforced; one of the evidences was
the image of the hard body promoted during Reagan’s era. Roth uses a confessional style to revisit the myths not only about men, but also members of Jewish diaspora, revealing struggles of his male protagonists to measure up to the ideals promoted by their culture. Alex Portnoy proves himself as a man by sleeping with as many American women as possible, describing it as a strategy to enter into American society, or perhaps more precisely, into Americanness. However, through his queered portrayal of Jews and the perfect image of America, to which he often refers with irony and sarcasm, he reveals an imbalance of power due to unjust racial constructions, which create the sense of inferiority in him. He furthermore exposes how the racial prejudices affect his sense of himself as a man and his relationship with women.

If we explain Alex’s behaviour towards women and his own sexuality as merely promiscuous, Roth’s message sent through this character would be lost. Alex’s predation on women is inscribed in the rhetoric of hard masculinity, which as it was shown, is the hegemonic model of masculinity in American culture. Yet, what disturbs Alex in his pursuit of becoming a ‘real American’ man is the feeling of shame, which he connects to his Jewishness embodied in the “obedient and helpless” Jewish boy; an imagery he frequently recalls (PC 73). Similarly Everyman, who had three wives and lovers, feels estranged and scared by failures of his body, by the loss of strength and finally, loneliness. Through these characters Roth exposes a certain paradox that lies at the heart of the hegemonic construction of masculinity: although the male protagonists experience a variety of emotions, they cannot manifest them for the fear of being exposed as unmanly. In particular, in order to achieve manliness they have to hide and mask the emotions considered ‘softening’, such as fear and
shame. Through this, they show that at the heart of the experience of shame lies other people’s judgment which becomes internalized and that shame relates to the quality of the self that is not desired; it is, in fact, the abject.

As it was shown in the discussion on hardness and softness and how both concepts are applicable to gender, the hard male is impenetrable both physically and emotionally. Roth’s characters however, bare their souls and bodies, shamelessly exposing their intimate lives and their shame. The ‘opening’ of the male body in Roth has queering potential, that is, it can subvert the model of masculinity perceived as normative. In his novel Raz. Dwa. Trzy (2007), discussed in the next chapter, Hubert Klimko-Dobrzaniecki introduces a similar character to that of Alex Portnoy, a Punk, who manifests his manliness through rebellion against the communist authorities but also through a sexual conquest. Even more parallels can be found in the portrayal of the male body in both writers. In Raz. Dwa. Trzy, as in Roth, Klimko-Dobrzaniecki introduces queer images of the male body, which challenge the hegemonic ideal of masculinity as shaped by dominant patriarchal ideologies in Poland: Romanticism, Catholicism and Communism. The first person narrative and the language in Raz. Dwa. Trzy, stylized as the characters’ ‘live speech’, creates an impression of the immediacy of the characters’ account found also in Portnoy’s Complaint. However, as Klimko-Dobrzaniecki’s novel consists of the narratives of three different male characters, the mood of the narrative often changes from that of full of rage, as when the Punk is speaking, to more settled, even sentimental, in the narratives of two other characters. This mood of the narrative can be seen as exposing the characters’ affiliations with hard or soft masculinity, as it takes place in Roth’s texts.
It has not to be forgotten that Roth’s characters’ shameless confessions are controlled by the writer, whose power lies in deciding how much and what precisely is put on display. For the same reason, namely control over the content and rights to manipulate it, Roth suggests connections between the characters and his own life. Creating an illusion of being given insights into the writer’s privacy and secrets appears a suitable technique to establish the reader’s engagement. Roth seems to need this level of reader’s interest to make his voice audible. I would like to conclude with Krondorfer’s insights on the possibilities of confessional writing to transform oneself:

Dominant ideals of manliness and masculinity can be undone by critical and self-reflective investigations, and the confessional genre, in which men demonstrate their willingness to remove their public masks in order to reveal a hitherto unknown intimate self, seems to be one cultural instance in which such “undoing” of gendered assumptions might be possible. Confessional writings, thus understood, can constitute a transformative “moral space” for men orienting themselves anew (5).

It is possible that the ‘honest’ and often provocative content of Roth’s texts is intended to draw attention to the writer himself in order to boost his own male ego. It could also be, however, that the insights into the intimate lives of his male protagonists, where they are exposed as insecure and vulnerable, is precisely that kind of technique which undermines the established myth of a hard male, which as shown in this chapter, appears an unachievable ideal.
Shame and Degradation in *Raz. Dwa. Trzy*

**Introduction**

This chapter explores the experiences of shame as expressed by the three coming-of-age male protagonists in Hubert Klimko-Dobrzaniecki’s novel *Raz. Dwa. Trzy* (2007). In the boys’ narratives shame revolves around issues of sexuality, sexual performance and the body but it is also manifested in the form of somatic symptoms, such as mutation, dirt and disease which are embodiments of shame. As the characters talk about masturbation, ejaculation, arousal, intercourse, disfigurement, illness, pain and pleasure, a detailed map of their male bodies emerges from the text. Yet, the author often presents those bodies in the context that ridicules them or disturbs the normative understanding of the male body; the body becomes the abject as in Kristeva’s understanding of something what “disturbs identity, system, order” (4). Moreover, those bodily images frequently evoke feelings of disgust or pity, such as is evident in the following narrative of one of the characters:

> Something strange is happening to my body. The skin on my chest aches. I feel something growing in there, this is unpleasant, my nipples are swelling, they are getting bigger... I think I’m dying...

> This isn’t normal and I’m beginning to look like girls from my class,

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73 Since the novel has not been translated into English, for the purpose of this research, the relevant fragments of the novel are translated form Polish into English. An excerpt of the novel, in English in translation by Antonia Lloyd-Jones, is available at: [http://www.bookinstitute.pl/ksiazki-detal,literatura-polska,6901,one--two--three.html](http://www.bookinstitute.pl/ksiazki-detal,literatura-polska,6901,one--two--three.html). I use the abbreviation of the novel’s title, *RDT*, throughout this chapter.
they have their breasts growing too; I'm ashamed, I'm ashamed...

(RDT 159).

In the above fragment, the male protagonist fears he is beginning to look unmanly when, due to some kind of hormonal imbalance, his breasts grow larger than those of other boys. It is not desirable for a man to have breasts, it is "not normal", or it could be even said, breasts in the male body are 'out of place' since they do not belong to the realm of manliness. Despite the fact that the source of this character's shame is located in the body (the breast), his entire self is overwhelmed by this abnormality for he admits: "I'm ashamed" and further emphasizes the mortifying quality of shame he experiences by referring to it as "dying". His shame refers to the idea, or ideal of the male body, that of a 'flat' chest for he confesses: "I wanted to be a normal boy – flat and happy" (RDT 183). This bodily mutation challenges the normative pattern of the body ascribed to male gender and becomes a source of shame as the character desperately wants to measure up to this ideal.

The characters in Raz. Dwa. Trzy have no names and as their narratives intertwine, it is difficult at times to discern 'who is speaking'. Yet, this stylistic feature may aim at avoiding categorization through subverting and complicating presented identities. In this chapter, I refer to the characters as "a punk, a priest-to-be and gay hairstylist", descriptions used by Zofia Sawicka in her overview of the writer's work (Sawicka 2009 "Hubert Klimko-Dobrzaniecki" [online]). These 'markers' reflect more accurately how the characters' identities, that of the Polish male, are constructed, or perhaps determined, either by sexuality, faith or patriotism. In his collection of interviews with the contemporary Polish male writers, Robert Ostaszewski remarks about the characters in Raz. Dwa. Trzy: "The three protagonists-narrators are clearly located outside the gendered, family and social
system; they are stuck in the borderland space, with reigning there uncertainty that generates anxiety" (Ostaszewski 209). Ostaszewski seems to refer to the dominant ideologies, suggesting that the characters are located at the margins where they provide a threat to the accepted forms of sociality in Poland. This statement proves true in the construction of subjectivities of the main characters who oppose the dominant patriarchal ideologies: heteronormativity, Catholicism and Communism; it seems intentional that one character is gay, one a punk while the third is planning to become a priest for it gives Klimko-Dobrzaniecki a pretext to engage with those ideologies.74 Since the characters have no names, throughout this chapter, I refer to them as the Gay, the Punk and the Priest-To-Be. Sawicka comments further, the protagonists “differ in almost every aspect”, however they are preoccupied with being manly: “they all try to fulfil their role as a man” (Sawicka 2009 “Hubert Klimko-Dobrzaniecki”[online]). Either verbally or by recalling specific behaviours they assert their manliness: “I was a real boy inside” claims one character, while the other states: “everyone in town knows that I’m a real male hairdresser” (RDT 30).

‘Real manliness’ appears a quality demanded also by others. One father shouts at his son crying from pain: “Shut the fuck up. Be a man not a girl, only girls cry” (RDT 123).

In their search for new male ideals, however, the characters often turn to other models of masculinity beyond the national ideology, mainly to American and British, as reflected in the protagonists’ fascination with music, hairstyle and clothes

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74 Paweł Leszkowicz in 2006 article about post-communist fundamentalism, “institutionalised homophobia” and “sexophobic taboo” in democratic Poland, explains heteronormativity – with a reference to works on Michael Warner, Samuel Chambers and Adrienne Rich which contributed to definition of the phenomenon – by stating it simply means that heterosexuality is “the norm” in culture, in society, in politics. It also means that everyone and everything is judged from the perspective of straight” (Leszkowicz 2006 “The Queer Story of Polish Subjectivity” [online]).
they would like to acquire. The perception of those ideals as superior and the rejection of their own national and cultural models undermines the homogenous model of masculinity promoted by the nationalistic discourse. It also poses a number of questions about the status quo of Polish masculinity positioned between so-called ‘Western’ and ‘Eastern’ models, and therefore it may be problematic to indicate clearly what patterns of masculinity hold the hegemonic position within Polish society. It is worth noticing that most of the significant discussions and research on gender in Poland is constructed on the basis of Western discourses and theories.75 At the same time gender theories are treated with suspicion, especially among nationally-orientated scholars and writers, as a specifically ‘female subject’ and domain of feminists.76 Elżbieta Oleksy observes that “masculinity as an independent research topic has enjoyed little if not marginal popularity among Polish authors” (qtd.in Kimmel 2005, 156). Yet, since Polish male subjectivity is constructed in relation to national but equally Western masculinity, as either defying or accepting those models, there seems to be no justification to study it merely within the context of national gender ideologies but rather comparatively, including the Western perspective. Such context exposes the hegemony of Western ideals, perceived as superior to national ideals of masculinity in most post-Soviet countries.77 At the same time, the comparative study of Western masculinity by the authors who challenge this hegemony in their national contexts exposes the variety

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75 This is evident in, discussed later in this chapter, Agnieszka Mrozik’s article on crisis of Polish masculinity, which is supported mainly by works of Michael Kimmel, or Tomek Kitiński’s article which draws from Julia Kristeva’s theory of abjection to explain marginalization of women and gays in post-communist Poland.
76 See section on (post)communism in this chapter for more discussion on the attitudes toward gender studies and feminism.
77 Michael Kimmel (2005) describes this phenomenon as “Eastern male inferiority complex” (Kimmel 155).
of its models rather than a single pattern; hence questioning any such hegemonic dominance.

In the “Introduction” to *Lektury pici [Reading Gender]*, Mieczysław Dąbrowski (2008) writes that in Poland shame has been attached mainly to issues of sexuality, body and sexual minorities. According to Dąbrowski, the institution responsible for this situation is primarily the Catholic Church with its politics of repression of the body and sexual needs. The subject under strictest taboo, however, is homosexuality, feared and stigmatized in private circles and in public disputes (Dąbrowski “Introduction” 7). In “The Queer Story of Polish Art and Subjectivity”, Paweł Leszkowicz expands on this subject arguing that in Poland, due to Communism and religious fundamentalism “the sexual revolution and the civil rights movement in the name of minority rights” did not happen until the turn of the twenty-first century. According to Leszkowicz, the lack of such a ‘revolution’ is manifested mainly in Polish society’s predominant heteronormativity. In such context, argues further Leszkowicz, “queer images are dangerously uncanny” for heterosexual audiences and “the experience of homo-erotic images and identities and their otherness” threatens the essentialist approach to gender in predominantly heterosexual and catholic culture; such images, when displayed in public can therefore turn into a political issue. This applies most specifically to masculinity, which, in Leszkowicz’s view is particularly “closed and codified”:

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78 *Lektury pici* is one of the first anthologies that reads Polish canon as well as contemporary texts from the perspective of gender and sexuality. One of the curious remarks by Dąbrowski is his reference to *Literatura „mniejszości seksualnych” [Literature of sexual minorities]*, a text from 1930 by an influential Polish literary critic and essayist, Tadeusz Boy-Żeleński. According to Dąbrowski, this 1930’s article expresses very similar concerns and anxieties regarding sexuality that are experienced in today’s Poland as well. This demonstrates the great persistence of national ideologies and their impact on the politics of gender.
Masculinity, as a gender norm, is especially closed and codified, causing exclusion or stigmatization of all individuals who cannot or do not want to conform. This is why opening masculinity, introducing pluralism to it, questioning heterosexual domination, and feminizing it, has deep existential, political, and liberating potential. The revolution is in discovering, writing, imagining, visualizing, and performing multiple forms of masculinity, numerous stories and male identities (Leszkowicz 2006 “The Queer Story of Polish Art and Subjectivity” [online]).

Tomek Kitliński, Pawel Leszkowicz, and Joe Lockard make an even more radical statement suggesting that in Poland “any public manifestation of difference” is met with acts of humiliation and violence (Kitliński 2005 “Poland's Transition: From Communism to Fundamentalist Hetero-Sex” [online]). Considering the above renders Klimko-Dobrzaniecki’s novel ‘dangerously uncanny’ since the writer challenges heteronormativity as the hegemonic model of masculinity through introducing queer images but also, literally, through introducing a gay character in his novel. Such images are polluting, in Sally Munt’s (2008) understanding of queer as “sick, ill, homosexual, to quiz, to cheat, to spoil”, for the heteronormative order (22). In addition, through the imagery of growing breasts in one of the boys, the writer feminizes the character and thus, symbolically, blurs a strict division between the male and female maintained by the patriarchal ideologies. The queered portrayal of the male characters is completed by the image of the community represented in the novel, which according to literary critic Mieczyslaw Orski (2011) appears as a collection of “eccentrics, exotic types, suicides, deviants and alcoholics” whose
“perversities, oddities and eccentricities” appear highly exaggerated (qtd. in Bierut 316).

In *Raz.Dwa.Trzy*, Klimko-Dobrzaniecki also exposes a relationship between the characters’ private shame and collective shame, evoked by the allusions to Silesia and the Communist regime as spaces of oppression. Both the place and the time share a shameful past, where the power was used to abuse and, where, significantly the body became a repository of this oppression. In her book *Świat bez kobiet. Plec w polskim życiu publicznym* (2001), a title which translates as *A World Without Women, Gender in Polish Public Life*, the feminist, sociologist and human rights activist, Agnieszka Graff, stresses that the Communist period has often been described as a “shameful pause in Polish social life” (35). The choice of words has not been accidental here since during Communism Polish society was subjugated to continuous surveillance and censorship in all spheres of life, hence the ‘pause’ may also refer to a certain paralysis of the social life, which also brings to mind the paralysis from shame. Most importantly in the context of this research, Graff stresses how shame caused by Communism is “deeply connected with gender”: most precisely, it is a time of “degradation, domestication and symbolic castration of men” (Graff 35). It meant, explains Graff, that the mythic Polish man (a brave fighter, family man and a breadwinner) had his field of activity suddenly reduced to domestic duties. Graff observes: “naturally this new, castrated man could be politically active, but this meant servility [to the Communist regime], being a careerist, conformism and ultimate degradation” (35). This perceived castration of men was placed together with the strengthening position of women. This was provoked by the reality of having to struggle to obtain food and women were becoming the main heroines in

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79 Translation of the relevant fragments is mine.
this struggle. Women’s position as equal to men was also channeled in Communist propaganda of gender equality embodied for instance in the popular slogan ‘women on tractors’.

The allusions to Silesia as a site of the concentration camps are evident in the writer’s references to Gross-Rosen as well as descriptions of anti-Semitic attitudes in the novel. In his exposition of those places where power was also used to abuse, to humble and degrade others and by showing how both the place and the time are significant in determining the characters’ identity, the writer presents very much a post-colonial approach in Alexandru’s terms. He also demonstrates that shame is not only reproduced within the families in the present, but it can be passed down from generation to generation, often masked by other affects such as anger, frustration or hatred. Moreover, this borderland space of the characters’ identities, and bodies since the boys are on their way to become men, is mirrored by the geographical borderline, which is Silesia. Silesia derived its existence from lines on a map, “lines drawn by a foreign body; and thus there is a sense in which the region becomes a foreign body to itself, something inorganic, unnatural” (Punter 113-114). Following the 1945 border change – Polish borders were moved westward incorporating previously ethnically German regions into Polish borders – the ethnic diversity of the region, which today consists of four different diasporas (Czech, German, Ukrainian, and Polish) and other ethnic minorities, such as Greeks and Jews, complicated the issues of national

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80 According to Kitliński and Leszkowicz in Poland homophobia goes hand in hand with anti-Semitism. As a proof they introduce the slogans chanted at gay parades by the anti-gay groups: “To the gas with you” or “Hitler didn’t kill you all” etc. Both homophobia and anti-Semitism have roots in fear and hatred of otherness (Kitliński, Leszkowicz “Let Us Be Seen” 95).
belonging. All the diasporas feature in Raz. Dwa. Trzy in the writer's attempt to reflect the specificity of this once German region.

The frequency with which the characters recall the humiliating scenes in Raz. Dwa. Trzy and the oppressiveness of shame surrounding their lives also makes the reading of the text oppressive. Klimko-Dobrzaniecki features an aesthetic which circles around violence and bodily degradation, drawing attention to the process of establishing victim and perpetrator, as well as shame's role in this process. The psychologist Mario Jacoby (1996) explains the meaning of degradation, emphasizing how such acts are aimed to enforce power onto others. Degradation is often used as a synonym for humiliation, observes Jacoby, and it revolves around the experience of power and powerlessness where degradation aims at making one vulnerable and submissive: "[o]ne is brought low or oppressed by those who wield power from above" (70). Although, according to Jacoby, it depends on the individual whether this loss of autonomy will be experienced as shameful, degrading practices make one feel minor and inferior. In Raz. Dwa. Trzy, the protagonists recall a series of humiliating, and degrading acts, such as abuse and physical neglect, or even rape, to which I refer as 'socially manufactured' shame for shame is being, in a way, imposed onto their bodies. The abjected bodies of the main protagonists and their victimization reflect the anxiety about the condition and roles of men in post-communist society and provide a critique of dominant patriarchal ideologies.

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81 Silesia is a region of Central Europe located mostly in Poland with smaller parts in Czech Republic and Germany. The Polish part of the region was incorporated into the country's territories after Second World War (by the order of the Soviet Union, who, at the time, occupied German Silesia). Due to those border changes and people's displacement, the term Silesian refers now to four different ethnic groups that are closely associated with the region: Czechs, Germans, Ukrainians and Poles, all those ethnic groups are present in Klimko-Dobrzaniecki's text. In an encyclopedia Ethnic Groups of Europe (2011) edited by Jeffrey E. Cole, we read "some members of the postwar generations now claim Silesian as their regional identity, while others identify simply as Polish". The author stresses however how problematic is the question of ethnic and national belonging in the region: "(...) ethnic identification is a vexed issue for all four groups" (Cole 339).
operating in Polish society. Furthermore, the body of the characters can be interpreted as a synecdoche of the social, a term coined by Mary Douglas in *Purity and Danger* (2002), to indicate how social prohibitions and taboos are represented in the body, conditioned and constructed by them. The reading of those male characters bodies is supported mainly by Mary Douglas’ concept of dirt and Elspeth Probyn’s (2005) concept of shame, which work together to explain the cultural and bodily symbolism of shame. Since those are male bodies, they are being read in the context of gender ideology in (post)communist Poland and the studies of the cultural and literary representations of masculinity. In particular, I draw upon Tomek Kitliński and Paweł Leszkowicz studies on homophobia and queer images in public life, and Agnieszka Mrozik’s insights on representation of backlash as expressing a crisis of masculinity in Polish literary context. Ewa Mazierska’s research on the representation of Polish masculinity in film proves invaluable as a unique study of that kind. Mostly, I refer to Mazierska’s insights on the male body in investigating how the dominant ideologies: Romanticism, Catholicism and Communism influenced the Polish male ideal. Finally, Hanna Gosk’s research brings an understanding of how shame status in Polish literature and public discourse has been conditioned by the literary tradition as well as mythologizing the past and history.

**Shame in Polish context**

In order to approach shame as portrayed in the novel it is crucial to look into the linguistic, historical and socio-cultural contexts of shame in Poland. From the linguistic point of view, supported by anthropological and sociological explanations on the treatment of shame, it becomes apparent that shame in Polish is a ‘dirty’ word, indicating at once physical and moral transgression; shame is a taboo. In her
linguistic and semantic analysis of the word *wstyd* [shame] in Polish, Ewa Jędrzejko goes as far back as its primary Indo-European meaning, which compared the feeling of shame to being dirty, being 'covered with manure', further associated with moral impurity (71). Semantically, the word shame is linked to the female intimate organ since the contemporary word *wstyd* substituted the earlier form *sromota*, used until the end of the 17th century to name the experience of shame while in modern Polish *srom* means 'vulva'. 82 Etymologically and linguistically then shame in Polish compounds the elements of dirt and femininity together. 83 Nevertheless, during the last two decades of the period, which in academic discourse is referred to as the 'post-communist period of transition' and in literary studies as 'literature after 1989', Polish literature, as well as cinema, have seen 'dirt' as being symbolically linked to masculinity and men, in works which bring shameful matters to the surface. In those works, shame applies to various spheres of men's lives, such as family and relationships, sexuality, intimate life and to their bodies as well. I discuss some of these novels and their authors later in the chapter.

Dirt has to be interpreted with reference to a socially and culturally established order, where the 'dirt' is seen as threatening the given order. In *Purity and Danger*, Mary Douglas defines the meaning of dirt as a "matter out of place", something that does not fit within the socially established borders and thus it is likely to remain hidden (40). Douglas' approach to dirt, body and pollution is convergent with Elspeth Probyn's (2005) idea of shame, as a "matter out of place", Probyn's

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82 This etymology is evident in the expression 'sromotny shame' used to describe shame which brings disgrace.
indication that shame has a similar threatening potential to dirt as understood by Douglas (Probyn xvi). A reaction to dirt, similar to shame, is disgust which Probyn calls “a bodily reaction to another body” (Probyn 2000, 127). Disgust in particular serves to indicate what in a given society is considered shameful and therefore disgust came to be used as a measure to establish laws and prohibitions.84 Consequently, when applied to a literary text, it is our disgust at the scene we read that makes its content obscene and, accordingly, generates some emotional and bodily reactions. Hence, shame and dirt refer to social prohibitions and inhibitions, as well as patterns of behavior we, consciously or not, embody, argues Probyn, whose approach is influenced by Pierre Bourdieu’s notion of *habitus* described by him as embodied history: “whether at the interpersonal, social or cultural level, shame points to boundaries, the habitual patterns of how we see values and rules and respond to them” (Probyn 38). Probyn stresses, similarly to Bourdieu, that individual habitus is shaped by the past experiences and further structured by class, gender, and ethnicity. These abstract ideas become incarnated as habitus, which dictates what we can and what cannot do; that is when shame comes to the fore. Probyn (2005) observes that these boundaries and patterns are reflected in the experience of the body being ‘out of place’; it is when the body registers it does not belong. This explains why shaming is often used as a technique of introducing discipline, embodied in the phrase ‘shame on you’, but also to appoint the boundaries of appropriateness: of what is or is not shameful. Mario Jacoby (1996) points out, however, the more rigid and narrow are our boundaries of shame “the greater is the likelihood that repressed contents will

84 In *Hiding from Humanity: Disgust, Shame and the Law* (2004), Martha Nussbaum explains that disgust closely relates to shame as it is, similarly to shame, an important regulatory component. Therefore, disgust may serve as “the primary or even sole reason for making some acts illegal. Thus, the disgust of ‘the reader or viewer’ is one primary aspect of the definition of obscene materials under current obscenity laws” (Nussbaum 2-3).
The analysis of the characters in Raz. Dwa. Trzy focuses on the content slipping out, on the inappropriateness, dirt and disgust that indicate transgression.

The margins of the body are commensurate with margins of the society, as was pointed by Douglas, are invested with power and danger: “we should expect the orifices of the body to symbolize its especially vulnerable points” (121). Since she sees the boundaries of the body to represent any bounded system, the matters “issuing from the body” such as secretions, passing through the boundary of the body can be equally perceived as transgression of the given social order; bodily margins should not be treated in isolation “from all other margins”, asserts Douglas (121). In Raz. Dwa. Trzy, the male body ‘leaks’: various secretions, such as urine, blood, sperm and urine transgress the boundaries of the body in front of the reader’s eyes, such as in the case of the neighbour urinating on one of the protagonists, the scene, to which I return later in the chapter. The skin no longer guarantees a safe containment of the male self: the skin swelling out of control into womanly-looking breast. In addition, since those bodies are male, it is essential to interpret the symbolism of such a representation in the context of the given ideology of masculinity. As it was argued by Leszkowicz in the previous section, opening the male body challenges the Polish hegemonic model of male gender. Is then the male body in Klimko-Dobrzaniecki’s novel purposefully constructed as dirty, and in fact, as the abject? And how can this be interpreted?

Taking into consideration the specific areas to which dirt has been attached in Polish context, Hubert Klimko-Dobrzaniecki’s novel from the outset may be perceived as ‘dirty’ by engaging with the subject of sexuality and shame but also through the narrative aesthetics. In his review of Raz. Dwa. Trzy, Grzegorz
Czekański describes Klimko-Dobrzaniecki’s prose, in particular with reference to Raz. Dwa. Trzy, as ‘ugly literature’. The ugly, in Czekański’s view, refers mainly to the novel’s aesthetics and language (311). In Raz. Dwa. Trzy, the reader is positioned as voyeur of the most private and shameful secrets, witnessing the humiliating scenes described by the protagonists. The opening narrative of the novel by one of the characters, his somewhat sentimental and sensuous reflections on blossoming lime trees, is juxtaposed with the narrative of another character who describes a sexual act with a close member of his family: “I’m fucking my own cousin...” followed by various details of their intercourse: “she bled like a bitch and sobbed, but I didn’t stop fucking her” (8). The “live speech” style of the narrative, as described by Tomasz Charnaś, creates a sense of directness and immediacy to what is being said and since what is often being described are scenes of abuse, the text becomes ‘an experience’, at times, an unpleasant one (Charnaś 2011 “One. Two. Three. Hubert Klimko-Dobrzaniecki” [online]). Being exposed to blood may raise a feeling of disgust in the reader, not only at the confrontation with human secretions but also at being exposed to a transgressive act, which is incest in Poland. When the reader witnesses the disgusting scene this can provoke a sense of self-disgust at having the curiosity to watch it. At the same time, the witness of someone’s shame may experience it too, for according to Lewis, shame is contagious, meaning that we recall our own scenes of shame and therefore can engage with other people’s shame (15).

Dirty language and sexual content may be one of the reasons Raz. Dwa. Trzy provoked many negative responses from critics, to which the writer himself refers as “extreme” since many reviews, in the writer’s view, were either favorable or “radically negative” (qtd.in Bierut 311). Klimko-Dobrzaniecki expresses
disappointment at the critics’ dismissal of this novel, particularly after the appreciative opinions of the writer’s earlier work, *Dom Róży. Krýsuvik* (2006), based on his experience of life and work in a care-home in Iceland. CzeKański (2012) observes that *Raz. Dwa. Trzy*, with all its “masculine metaphysics, sociological observations and existential matters” was unacceptable to critics evident in a straightforward negative opinion about the novel (313). The latter contributed to a superficial treatment of the novel and, in result, oversimplified interpretations. Many critics saw Klimko-Dobrzaniecki’s aesthetics as an expression of the writer’s sexism and misogyny. In “Precz z kobietami” [“Down with Women”], a review of the writer’s other novel *Bornholm, Bornholm* (2010), a female reviewer accuses Klimko-Dobrzaniecki of misogyny for the outwardly hostile, even hateful treatment of women – which, the reviewer believes, reflects the attitude of the author himself – represented in women’s negative portrayal in the novel (katasia_k 2011 “Precz z kobietami: “Bornholm Bornholm” Hubert Klimko-Dobrzaniecki” [online]).

Correspondingly, the list of the negative images of women in *Raz. Dwa. Trzy* is long: an enraged mother beating her son, a wife insulting her husband, a female neighbour who rapes one of the boys, a young girl who enjoys violent sex or a sexually insatiable nurse. Even though, women’s portrayal appears generally pejorative, the image of men is far from positive. In addition, male characters and their identity depend greatly on other women, even those who shame or abuse them. Klimko-Dobrzaniecki admits that his male characters are often dominated and suppressed by

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85 In one of the scenes in *Bornholm, Bornholm*, Horst forces his wife to sleep with him against the woman’s will. Such practices, known today as marital or spousal rape, were common practices even in the recent past. A wife was seen as property and by entering the marriage she was making herself available for the husband. Marital rape was beginning to be made illegal in the 1970s, firstly in Eastern Europe and Scandinavia, most Western and developed countries introduced it much later. In England, rape in marriage was criminalised in 1991 (Bennice; Resick 230). Describing those practices appears to be Klimko-Dobrzaniecki’s way of exposing patriarchal laws and privileges that allowed men to degrade and abuse women, rather than simply being misogynistic.
women, which “isn’t such a bad thing”, adds the writer (Kwaśniewski 2009 “Szacun dla księdza” [online]). At the same time, he rejects those claims his books are, in any way, against women by pointing out that in his texts men are frequently being shown as responsible for a great deal of women’s dissatisfaction: “throughout the course of her marriage, a mother of two kids never had an orgasm” remarks the writer (Zatońska 2011 “Lubię wracąć do swoich książek” [online]). It is curious of the writer to mention sex as a main source of satisfaction men can provide women. In “Czego pragną mężczyźni” [“What Men Do Want”], a review of Bornholm, Bornholm, Dariusz Nowacki concludes that the centre of the “male cosmos” in Klimko-Dobrzaniecki’s prose appears to be located “in their flies” since “sex seems a compensation for their failures” (Nowacki 2011 “Czego pragną mężczyźni” [online]). In Raz. Dwa. Trzy, as well as in Bornholm, Bornholm, becoming a man and assuring one’s manliness is linked, in one way or another, to sexual experience.

Some critics, however, regarded the novels’ obscene and blunt language, as well as describing numerous sexual scenes, as an expression of “radical male perspective” (Wolny-Hamkało 2007 “Raz. Dwa. Trzy” [online]). How is this ‘radical male perspective’ evident in the narrative then? Katarzyna Frukacz sees it in the naturalistic quality of the descriptions, concise form and dynamism, as well as in the sexual content disclosed openly in the novel. Not dismissive of the novel’s style, Frukacz interprets the presence of obscenities and violent eroticism as the purposeful provocation of the writer’s text (qtd. in Bierut 313). As she argues, the vulgarization of sex in Raz. Dwa. Trzy, does not serve a purpose of perversity but empowerment of men, who otherwise appear dominated and suppressed (Frukacz 2011 „Echo Wspy” [online]). Sex appears a main source of men’s liberation and their ‘masculinization’. It is worth mentioning here that the word ‘masculinity’, in Polish męskość, stands for
sexual potency, however, it is also used as a euphemism for the male sexual organ. What is expressed in the language is equating the male sexual organ, the penis, to the gendered construction of masculinity, and this opens many interpretative possibilities. One such interpretation may be that the language reveals patriarchal mentality which equates gender, culturally constructed form of masculinity (Butler 1990) with biological sex.

Like Kureishi and Roth, Klimko-Dobrzaniecki reduces the distance between the reader and the text by suggesting the connection of the story to his own experiences. The writer bestows each character with personal features and facts from his own biography, locates the story in the place resembling Bielawa, although not named in the novel, the town where he grew up, and introduces many personas who resemble members of his own family and community. In this particular novel, however, Klimko-Dobrzaniecki occupies two spaces and writes from two positions: he employs the historical distance by setting the story up in the communist reality. At the same time, he is a representative of the post-1989 literature, that is, literature written and published under a new democratic system, with most works published in the first decade of the twenty first century. In terms of ideological context and engagement in socio-cultural issues, such as racism, homophobia and abortion, the novel appears contemporary, touching upon issues that have dominated most public debates of the last decade. Nevertheless, since the novel is written from a perspective of communist reality, it requires looking into communist ideology, in particular with regard to gender ideology of the time, which was formative for the

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86 In the interview with Kwaśniewski, Klimko-Dobrzaniecki admits that many experiences described by the characters in Raz. Dwa. Trzy, formed also his childhood experience (Kwaśniewski, “Szacun dla księdza”).

87 Those issues form the context of discussion in Agnieszka Graff’s book introduced earlier in the chapter.
writers of his generation, namely, those born in the 1960s and 1970s. Before moving onto more detailed discussion of Communism as well as its connection to shame, in the following section I attempt to assess the writer's position within the Polish literary market and among other male writers.

Hubert Klimko-Dobrzaniecki in context

Raz. Dwa. Trzy, was the third of Hubert Klimko-Dobrzaniecki’s works to be published after a collection of short stories Wariat (2007) and a novel Kofysanka dla wisielca (2007) [The Lullaby to A Hanged Man]. At the time of publishing all those works, Klimko-Dobrzaniecki had been living and working in Iceland. He described this experience in a diptych Dom Róży. Krýsvík, which appeared a year earlier. He is therefore described as a one of those Polish writers who “settled at different corners of the world” bearing witness to their émigré experience (Nowacki 2011 „Czego pragną mężczyźni?” [online]). Seen from that perspective, Klimko-Dobrzaniecki’s work would represent the emigration literature, the body of which has been growing rapidly since the 1990s, following the wave of Polish emigration mainly to the United Kingdom and Ireland. Referring to this experience, the writer emphasizes that emigration does not necessarily relate to geographical dislocation; emigration is “a state of mind”, he says: “you can be an émigré living in Warsaw [here, in the meaning in the country of your origin]” (Zatońska 2011 “Lubię wracać do swoich książek” [online]). This statement seems to be embodied in his works, since in consecutive novels the writer moves his characters between different worlds and spaces as if he could not find one place for them to settle and belong. At the same time, the author also moves homes in a real life. When asked why so frequently
he moved from place to place – Klimko-Dobrzaniecki lived successively in Poland, Holland, England, Iceland and currently he lives in Vienna and, from time to time, in Poland – the writer explains that your hometown does not per se guarantee being rooted there. He says: “to be rooted somewhere you need to be given a chance. And from the beginning, I didn’t have such a chance” (Kwaśniewski 2009 “Szacun dla księdza” [online]). This comment appears a critique of his family and community for creating conditions impossible for him to exist and fit in. The writer’s understanding of emigration evokes the imagery of, more generally, being out of place rather than merely the experience of living abroad, and his life in-between different countries and cultures appears the embodiment of this statement.8

In Raz. Dwa. Trzy, Klimko-Dobrzaniecki ‘returns’ to a Polish setting. He locates his story in a small Silesian town, reminiscent of Bielawa, the place of his childhood, of which he provides a detailed and vivid description. This return to his local community may express the need to be anchored somewhere, a counter-experience to that of alienation and rootedness that often occurs in emigrants. It is also an expression of new trends in post-1989 literature, which centres on local communities and diasporas. This particular feature of Raz. Dwa. Trzy, namely describing the local place, positions the novel as literature of “little homelands”, which examines how a person’s place of birth and community determines his or her identity. In “Global and Local”, Elżbieta Rybicka attempts systematizing trends in terms of spaces represented in the latest Polish literature. Rybicka expands on the subject:

8 In “Wrong Sex and the City: Polish Migration and Masculinity”, Dirk Uffelmann discusses challenges to traditional models of masculinity in the wake of migration to Western metropolises in literary productions by Polish migrants to Germany, the UK, and Ireland. Uffelmann writes that male migrants are deprived of (seemingly) secure masculine roles when confronted with a subaltern position as unskilled migrant workers. Although Raz. Dwa. Trzy is set in Poland, it was written while Klimko-Dobrzaniecki lived in Reykyavik working as a care home worker.
Thinking about space in Polish literature evolved greatly after 1989. The first phase of this evolution, back in the 1990s, may be described as the discovery of a new map. This was no longer the old political map, on which the whole country was marked in one colour, but a map of multi-ethnicity and multi-nationality, in which various tints overlapped in various areas, blending into multicolour patches. The second significant process happening in the 1990s was the creation of a new, symbolic geography – decentralised, and openly endorsing peripheral, trans-border spaces. (...) This process of decentralization and endorsement had its counterpart in the literature of the period: the literature of what is known as “literature of little homelands” (Rybicka 30).


Rybicka provides also an overview of a criticism around the genre, which according to those criticizing it, tends to “mythologize[-] the community of neighbors”. The genre, in Rybicka’s view, grew out of a need to provide an escape “from the chaotic and confusing present into the nostalgically evoked past” and hence, it often idealizes the past. In addition, this type of literature departs from assuming that the place of one’s origin secures one’s identity by providing an opportunity to indentify oneself with that place (Rybicka 30). In this criticism of one’s local setting, we can see an echo of Stuart Hall’s (1994) critique of an understanding of diaspora, discussed in the chapter on Hanif Kureishi. As it is apparent from Klimko-Dobrzaniecki’s comment about the difficulties he faced to belong with his local community, such ‘anchoring’ is not always possible and the
writer’s stance is reflected in Raz. Dwa. Trzy. Klimko-Dobrzaniecki’s return to his local setting seems to have a rather different purpose; that is a (re)examination and critique of the place of his origin rather than its glorification. Instead of providing an arcadia-like vision of a ‘little homeland’, Raz. Dwa. Trzy de-mythologizes, if not demonizes, the reality represented, to which, moreover, the characters themselves refer to as “parochial hell” (RDT 45). In this particular text, roots signify “the provincial” associated with both the anachronous models of identity and literature (Rybicka 30).

The boys’ narratives reveal disturbing relationships with their parents, who appear to be driven by the emotions of resentment, sadness and outrage. After the collapse of his parents’ marriage, the Priest-To-Be character stays with his enraged mother who does not refrain from using physical violence with her son. During his teenage years his body begins to “play tricks” on him - as he calls his over-enlarged breasts (160). As a result of his bodily mutation he avoids girls’ company (in order to hide his shame) and people soon assume he is going to become a priest, what the boy himself begins to believe too. The mother, according to the narrator, is taking pleasure seeing him going through a nightmare of his growing breasts and uses her son’s vulnerability to give vent to her frustration and anger. Similarly, the Gay character grows up without knowing his father, being raised only by his over-protective mother, who dictates his every step. The mother fears her son may grow up to be ‘different’ than other people, therefore she becomes enraged when she learns her son may be left-handed: “you have to write with the right hand... You can’t be a ‘mankut’, you can’t shame me, do you understand?” (RDT 63-64).8 In Polish ‘mankut’ is a pejorative term for a left-handed person. The existence of the term in itself suggests that this quality, for long, had been perceived as a defect.

8 In Polish ‘mankut’ is a pejorative term for a left-handed person. The existence of the term in itself suggests that this quality, for long, had been perceived as a defect.
Punk character lost his mother in early age and since then he is being raised by his father, who in various ways neglects him. He recognizes his father’s lack of enjoyment of the paternal role what makes him to feel guilty of being a ‘burden’. At one point he confesses: “he shouts constantly, everything disturbs him, I disturb him – I feel it is me who disturbs him most” (*RDT* 86). What is striking in all the above narratives is parents’ lack of positive affection for their children, recognized by the boys, as if the parents were punishing their offspring for their own failures. Getting rid of their shame, the parents reject or abuse the boys making them feeling unwanted, inadequate and defective.

Physical violence and emotional neglect, which may be perceived as a kind of violence too, in presented parent-child relationships, are amplified by the accumulation of degrading acts the boys experience from other members of the town. Those are for instance, the female physical education teacher who organizes the exercise for boys, hoping to see, according to the narrator’s comment, “our willies sticking out from the gym shorts. She was pleased then and was laughing at boys blushing from shame” (*RDT* 53). Another narrator refers to a routine examination by a doctor in order to assess his ability of joining the military service: “I had to strip naked and show everything and the doctor (brute!) took long time to thoroughly examine my anus” (*RDT* 185). Despite admitting he “never shared this with anyone”, the Gay character recalls the story of being violently abused by his peers who after undressing him, wrap his penis in a newspaper and set it on fire. With a sense of defeat and resignation, the Gay comments on the incident: “soon, there was no sign of the fire. Only mark in the soul. And this nickname. A fag…” (*RDT* 76). As the above examples demonstrate, the disgracing acts, although described as happening to each of the boys exclusively, are not single occurrences. The community and
institutions of the town are involved in manufacturing shame, not even, in the Foucaultian term to introduce discipline, but, as it seems, to debase and humiliate. Those young and vulnerable boys are being scapegoated by the community driven by the wish, or perhaps a habit, to degrade and humiliate.

Shame in local settings

As the narrators recall their personal stories in the course of the narrative, they touch upon a number of Polish “individual and group phobias”, using the expression of Tomasz Charnaś. The critic writes that in Raz. Dwa. Trzy, Klimko-Dobrzaniecki “records some expressions of the Polish mentality” manifesting his sharp criticism. Indeed, the writer’s characters voice the common prejudices and stereotypes such as those related to the Catholic Church’s dogma or anti-Semitism, although they often present them in the form of allusions or a joke. This strategy is most likely, what one reviewer of the novel, refers to as Klimko-Dobrzaniecki’s “speaking directly and in between the lines” (Charnaś 2011 “One, Two, Three” [online]).

One of the characters introduces the portrayal of the occupants of the housing estate building, a typical communist-era type of architecture called blok, of which he is one of the tenants. The writer uses this scene to expose the most shameful and conflicting issues of Polish social life where the multi-storey building may be seen to represent the symbolic layering of taboos related to different spheres of social and private life. Among others, the character describes the old, “dirty” Jewish woman,

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90 In “Identities of A Housing Estate”, Samu Szemery remarks about the negative image they evoke reminding people of “the narrow horizons they offered for living, the lifestyle of poorly educated inhabitants and the architectural language associated with totalitarian regimes” (71). In Raz. Dwa. Trzy, the character moves from a previously owned by German family house to one of such Estate Houses; both houses representing the histories of Nazi and, later, Communist regimes.
whom everyone accuses of spreading the bedbugs in the building. He relates: "The bedbugs led to the anti-Semitic demonstrations and to the fact that each flat stunk with muchozol [the name of a popular anti-insect spray; in Polish 'gas'] since everyone wanted to get rid of the bedbugs, whereas the only right solution of the problem, as it seemed, was to get rid of the Jew" (RDT 144). The boy’s speech, however maintains a humorous tone, represents anti-Semitic attitudes ingrained in Polish reality and mentality, but also in a subversive way, it condemns those attitudes precisely by exposing them in such a mocking way. The fragment about this Jewish woman ends with the boy’s comment about her death; she choked on a fishbone during the Christmas Eve dinner. This image activates a number of other prejudices about Jewish people, for instance that of Jews killing Jesus and thus deserving to be punished.91 Another flat in the same building, according to the narrator’s account, is occupied by a doctor, who carries out illegal abortions in very unfavourable, or even life-threatening conditions for this kind of practice: “Sometimes he couldn’t do all of them, especially when the woman from the kiosk downstairs was puncturing all condoms with a pin” (RDT 142).92 Again, in that scene, Klimko-Dobrzaniecki uncovers the hypocrisy of Polish society, where certain practices are accepted under condition they are being carried out in private, and remain ‘hidden’. The ironic and somewhat casual way of describing, how the human remains, a product of the mentioned abortions, blocked the building’s drains system is when the writer’s

91 Religious prejudice against Jews is described by John Rousmaniere in A Bridge to Dialogue: The Story of Jewish-Christian Relations (1991). He writes about common prejudices among Christian believers: “These people believe that Jews are to be held in contempt because of their disbelief in Jesus Christ as messiah and savior. Even more important, Jews are to be punished as a collectivity because of killing Jesus (7).

92 This comment refers to another of Polish phobias, namely a use of condoms prohibited by the Catholic church as this goes against the Biblical order to reproduce.
critique ‘penetrates’ through the characters’ voice, who appears to young to understand what he describes.

The novel appears, in many ways, private. The setting, the place of the author’s youth, is not the only autobiographical element of the story. Each boy goes through some kind of experiences known from the writer's biography, such as the difficult relationship with his nagging and overprotective mother, consequences of growing up without a father as well as the shame of it and the ‘nightmarish’ Silesian town, Bielawa, in which he was growing up. The writer admits to those in his interview with Tomasz Kwaśniewski, adding other experiences incorporated into the story, such as being a punk or the intention of becoming a priest (Kwaśniewski 2009 “Szacun dla księdza” [online]). Although, the author bestows the characters with features from his own life, he also employs a distance to these private experiences by splitting the narrative into three voices of three different subjectivities. At the same time, he enjoys the spatial or even cultural distance to the place and society he describes since he speaks from the position of an outsider. As Tomasz Charnaś suggests, the book can be viewed as a kind of confession: “the reader finds an honest account of an émigré, who, after many years, explains the reason of leaving the homophobic, church-dogmatic and nationalistic Poland”. Yet, this revisiting of the time and place of his childhood seems significant for it was a formative period for his male identity, observes the reviewer, who emphasizes that through the creation of such young characters the writer attempts to capture those moments when a person becomes aware of his or her psychic, national and sexual autonomy. What the critic also observes in his reading of the characters, is that in Klimko-Dobrzaniecki’s

93 In the same interview by Kwaśniewski, the writer admits to being ashamed of his father, who had a reputation of a drunk, which lived long after his father’s death, and which led to the writer’s decision to change his surname.
94 The translation from Polish to English is mine.
writing, “gaining experience and attempting to understand the world occur through
the body” (Charnaś 2011 “One, Two, Three” [online]).

In the same review Charnaś writes that “significantly, the way [the
characters] are initiated into adulthood is determined by the place where they grow
up (the Polish-German melting pot) and the historical era (under communism)
against which the small boys fight their own personal wars” (Charnaś 2011 “One,
Two, Three” [online]). Although the reviewer does not expand on what are the ways
the place and time determine the characters’ identity it can be assumed, however, it is
shaped primarily in relation, or opposition to the, Communist regime, seeping into
every aspect of Polish reality, for in another place the reviewer comments “the novel
from the time of communist system: about young boys who, through the therapeutic
masturbation and the acts of initiation, are growing up ... to protest” (Charnaś 2011
“One, Two, Three” [online]). In addition, the evocation of Communism and, the
place, Silesia, establishes immediate connection with shame. Both the place and the
time refer to humiliating scenes in Polish history, such as the holocaust and
concentration camps, expulsion of Germans from the region of Silesia, post-war
violence or shameless crimes of Communism, in which Poles participated not only as
victims but often as active agents and perpetrators; something that many Poles still
find difficult to admit or acknowledge95. In Raz. Dwa. Trzy, those issues are hinted at
by the characters when they for instance draw attention to the war artifacts and
German presence in town. Klimko-Dobrzaniecki demonstrates how the emotional
landscape, guilt and shame, become embodied by the characters, and how shame

95 Perhaps the best example illustrating a reluctance of Polish society to admit shame of participating
in the acts of violence against Jews, are protest of nationalistic groups against consecutive books of
Jan Gross. His first book in Poland, Neighbors (2001) which describes and provides evidence of the
1941 massacre of nearly 350 Polish Jews in Jedwabne, committed not by Nazis by Polish inhabitants
of the town.
manifests itself through aggressive and shameless behaviours of the town people. On
the symbolic level, there is a constant interrelation between the notion of victim and
perpetrator apparent in the way the characters are constructed and portrayed – in that
we can see their movement from a victim, when they are being abused and
humiliated, to perpetrator, when they become violent towards others.

The experience of coming of age in an oppressive and violent reality has been
portrayed also by other male writers. In the novel Gnój [The Dung] (2003), adapted
as a film Pręgi [Scars], Wojciech Kuczok describes the story of a man who from an
adult perspective comes to terms with his childhood that had left many ‘scars’.

Kuczok, who also grew up and has lived in Silesia, and who, as Hubert Klimko-
Dobrzaniecki, belongs to the first generation of post-transition writers, describes the
toxic relationship of a son and a father; the father uses shaming and violence as a
method of education and ‘masculinization’ of his son. In the finale of the story, the
building occupied by the family gets flooded over with excrement pouring from the
broken pipe – a symbolic scene in which the moral ‘dirt’ meets the physical dirt.

Very similarly, a nightmarish vision of childhood is present in the film of Stanislaw
Fabicki, Męska sprawa (2001) [The Man Thing]. The common feature of Kuczok’s
story and Fabicki’s film is the father’s belief that humiliating and degrading their
sons is the right way to manhood. The fact that such stories begin to emerge in great
numbers after 1989, the year that marked the fall of the Communist regime in

Poland, cannot be ignored. Their emergence itself is a form of protest and
stigmatization of violent and humiliating practices, used to diminish, or destroy,
people’s self-esteem. As some studies suggest, in a new democratic system, men
attempt to regain their position after having been ‘emasculated’ by Communism. The
authors of *Handbook of Studies on Men and Masculinities* (2005) expand on this subject:

At the time of state and nation rebuilding, the power of the nation had to be in the hands of the men. All problems related to men were labelled as men’s crises because, according to widespread opinion, the Soviet socialist regimes had infantilized and feminized them in the ideology of sexual equality (Kimmel 158).\(^{96}\)

In the light of this comment, the introduced examples of fathers’ violent behaviours towards their sons may reflect an attempt to masculinize, and thus, toughen them; this, furthermore, can reflect a need to emphasize their difference from the soft and feminine.

In *Świat bez kobiet* (2001), Agnieszka Graff argues that masculinisation of the public space leads to marginalization of women in politics and public disputes, even those regarding women’s matters, which appear controlled entirely by men.\(^{97}\)

Graff’s book which sets out from a conviction that the situation of gender equality will improve, in particular after Poland’s inclusion in the EU, expresses her disappointment in the book’s conclusion emphasizing that during the course of writing her book the situation seems to have worsened, with evident reluctance of the politicians to address gender issues and growing dislike towards feminism.\(^{98}\) This provokes Graff’s conclusion that the end of Communism, which brought a new democratic system, reinstated patriarchal order that had been disturbed by the arrival

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\(^{97}\) For more on the attitudes to feminism in post-communist countries, see P. Watson, “(Anti)feminism after Communism” in A. Oakley and J. Mitchell (Ed) *Who Is Afraid of Feminism: Seeing through the Backlash* (1997).

\(^{98}\) Just to list some examples, Graff mentions strict abortion laws as well as ridiculing and undermining social and political activity of feminists (7).
of Communism: "if communism turned men into ‘a woman’, it was thanks to Solidarity movement he could be transformed into a man again" (Graff 36). Nine

Literature reflects the politics described by Graff. In Raz. Dwa. Trzy the expression of this politics is evident in the portrayal of the male characters, fathers in particular, who in the sphere of domestic life, which in patriarchal mythology is reserved only for women, appear completely lost. The following section provides a closer look into the figure of a father, a supposed role model for the young boys.

Failed fathers and lovers – men as victims

In many of Hubert Klimko-Dobrzaniecki’s texts, and in Raz. Dwa. Trzy in particular, men appear defeated or failed as fathers, lovers or sons. Moreover, men frequently appear as victims, emasculated and shamed by mothers, fathers, lovers and members of community. In this respect, the recently published Bornholm, Bornholm (2011) links thematically to Raz. Dwa. Trzy. Both novels explore issues of male identity and introduce characters who struggle with being emasculated, while at the same time, they attempt to prove their manliness, either by demonstration of strength, sometimes violence, and through sexual conquests. Referring to Bornholm, Bornholm, Dariusz Nowacki writes it is the novel about “contemporary men, however disguised in the mask of different historical and cultural setting” (Nowacki 2011 “Czego pragną mężczyźni” [online]). Indeed, the story in Bornholm, Bornholm begins at the threshold of the Second World War in German Bavaria. The main protagonist, Horst, is portrayed by the nameless narrator as a man frustrated with his castrating wife; the wife refuses to have sex with him and demands he urinates “like a woman”, that is

99 Translation from Polish into English is mine. Solidarity is a social movement considered to have initiated the end of Soviet Union through the spread of anti-communist ideals. For more details on the movement, see, for instance The Polish Solidarity Movement in Retrospect: A Story of Failure Or Success? (2009) edited by Dariusz Aleksandrowicz and others.
sitting down on the toilet, to what demand Horst reacts by “declaration of a war” with his wife (Bornholm, Bornholm 16-17). The beginning of the real, Second World War, provides the protagonist with the opportunity to regain his masculinity. He joins the army and as a Wehrmacht soldier (which can be seen an embodiment of power and authority) is sent to the Danish island, Bornholm, where he falls in love with the peasant girl Gudrun – an affair with her gives Horst a chance to reassure his manliness manifested in sexual potency. A second parallel narrative of the novel is a son’s monologue addressed to his mother, who is in a coma. During the long visits, the man confesses his hatred to his overprotecting mother, whom he blames for intimacy problems with women in his adult life.

In Bornholm, Bornholm the story is located in a distant past in two different geographical locations, however, both male protagonists portrayed by Klimko-Dobrzaniecki express a fear of failing as a man, thus, it could be concluded, that the writer makes a statement that this anxiety is a somewhat universal experience for men; no matter the historical, social or cultural circumstances. However, a more likely interpretation is that no matter where the author locates his male characters, his own experiences that proved formative for his male identity, haunt his male characters as well. In Raz. Dwa. Trzy, one protagonist reflects on the persistence of patterns with which we become inscribed “Is it possible to leave all the memories behind and start everything anew?” (RDT 130). These comments may apply also to fathers, who cannot liberate themselves from the ideals taught by their fathers; most likely those of their heroism and bravery during the World Wars, which are not valid in the non-heroic communist reality.

The novels such as Bornholm, Bornholm, can be placed next to other recent works, such as Daniel Odija’s Niech to nie będzie sen (2008), Ignacy Karpowicz’s
*Gesty* (2008) or Jerzy Franczak’s *Da capo* (2010), for they treat about family matters but more specifically about “psychological and erotic condition of the contemporary men” within the institution of family, as Dariusz Nowacki observes in the review of Klimko-Dobrzaniecki’s novel (Nowacki 2011 “Czego pragną mężczyźni” [online]).

*Raz. Dwa. Trzy* too provides a portrayal of three families of coming-of-age boys; significantly, their fathers, are, either physically or emotionally, absent. The Priest-To-Be character narrates:

> My father was a hunter. A hunter is a kind of father, who has no interest in his son, in playing or even hunting together with him. A hunter is a kind of father who runs away, who, with every coming opportunity, flies to the forest, mountains, runs away from responsibilities to his childhood’s world of hunting. A hunter is a kind of father who never grows up (*RDT* 64).

Not only the father avoids the emotional attachment with his son but soon he has to abandon the family overall, thrown out of the house by the outraged wife, who discovers his infidelity. The scene of the argument between the husband and wife, or rather the wife shouting insults at her husband, uncovers the sad reality of the family, where the father only takes interest in his stuffed animals, mother is frustrated and angry, and the son, terrified with the shadows of the stuffed animals hanged on the walls, “wets himself at night” (*RDT* 83). The wife confronts her husband: “you idiot, you have a son but you don’t engage in any activities with him. You don’t take any interest in him running away to the forest instead; but he is a part of you too so you are running away from yourself” (*RDT* 82). The judgment about the man’s role as a father is followed by the wife’s critique of her husband’s qualities as a man and a lover. She calls him a “coward” and a “stinker” pointing at the unpleasant odour
coming from his mouth, feet and his whole body that disgusts her \textit{(RDT 82)}.

Although the enraged woman mad with rage appears terrifying, the narrator evidently sympathizes with her in her judgment of the man since the scene is being narrated merely by her. The silenced man utters words only once, to express his preoccupation about a potential damage of the birds his furious wife throws down to the floor; this exposes this man as even more disengaged with his paternal and familial roles. In the considered fragment, the wife appears powerful and authoritarian, whereas the husband is being ridiculed and emasculated by her when she undermines (by exposing him and voicing her critique) his qualities as a father and as a man: in the finale of the scene, she points a hunting rifle at him making him sweat from fear \textit{(RDT 85)}. Hunting is an embodiment of traditional masculinity, however, in this scene, the gender roles are reversed, and it is a woman who becomes a 'hunter' and a man victim.

It can be argued that the picture of family as presented in both novels reflects, more generally, the struggle between males and females but also within each gender itself. Referring to the portrayal of male and female characters and their relationship in Klimko-Dobrzaniecki’s novels, Polish critic Katarzyna Frukacz observes: “the male is dominating within the plot creating, together with the secondary female characters, a difficult, if not toxic relation” \textit{(Frukacz 2011 “Echo Wyspy” [online])}.\textsuperscript{100} A wife who is questioning masculinity of her husband and a possessive mother’s love are recurrent and significant female figures for Klimko-Dobrzaniecki’s male protagonists, observes Frukacz. Ewa Mazierska’s (2008) work on masculinity provides insight into the possible reasons of antagonism between men and women. Although Mazierska’s research is based on the overview of masculinities in post-

\textsuperscript{100} Translation from Polish is mine.
communist cinema, her findings, to a large degree, prove relevant also for literature. Based on the analysis of representation of male characters in Polish, Czech and Slovak film, Mazierska’s research demonstrates that the majority of men came across “more as a product of history and ideology, than independent agents” (15). The main ideologies, which affected men and their relationship with women, were Romanticism, Catholicism and Communism which “overtly and covertly” favour men, granting them privileges of action and power, argues Mazierska (215). As Mazierska observes, those privileges did not make men happy for various reasons. Firstly, because with privileges came expectations and duties that proved difficult or even impossible to fulfil: “the hardest of all was most likely fighting in a war” (Mazierska 215). Moreover, the patriarchal ideologies were a source of conflict between men, which in cinema, and literature, is often portrayed as conflict between fathers and sons.  

Finally, observes Mazierska those ideologies, which dominated social life, injured men in a sense that had led to their antagonism with women. According to Mazierska, those ideologies, predominantly Romanticism and Catholicism, implied men’s superior position to women. Mazierska refers to Catholicism as “phallocentric” religion, evident mainly in this ideology’s implications that the “father’s power and authority should be greater than that of the mother” and similarly the husband should have a higher position at home than his wife (218).

Furthermore, those patriarchal ideologies, argues Mazierska, are responsible for the failure of Polish men as lovers; women reject men or men withdraw from the relationship with them, because men cannot match the expectations women apply to them. This is because, explains Mazierska, the double forces of Romanticism and  

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101 The entire genre of Polish cinema, called Cinema of Moral Concern, was built around the theme of the Oedipal rivalry.
Catholicism in Poland “chiselled a male ideal which was especially difficult for real men to match” (216). On the one hand, the nationalistic ideologies born during Polish Romanticism, which coincided with Poland being under partitions and physically non-existent throughout the nineteenth century, demanded of men to be patriots, to dedicate all their efforts and lives to fight for the country’s independence, abandoning family and home, if necessary. On the other hand, the Catholic dogma emphasizes the importance of the father and his participation in the family life. These patriarchal ideals were however distorted by the arrival of Communism, with a different gender ideology. The patriarchal ideologies listed by Mazierska, which are still highly influential in Poland, as was shown by Graff (2001), are now met with the new demands promoted by the feminist theories of gender equality. Their appearance in Poland was soon followed by the proclamation of the masculinity crisis; such as is evident for instance in Zbyszko Melosik’s book *Kryzys męskości w kulturze współczesnej* (2002) [masculinity crisis in contemporary culture]. Those new, often conflicting demands, as well as the position of men during Communism, escalated the reluctance to accommodate feminism and female activity in politics and social life, indeed even resulting in a backlash against it.

Agnieszka Mrozik investigates the phenomenon of backlash against feminist ideology in post-1989 Polish literature as a response to the masculinity crisis that, according to scholars, coincided with political and social changes in Poland. As was discussed earlier, various discourses on gender reached Poland as late as in the 1990s, and therefore coincided with emerging new voices on the masculinity crisis; the first Polish monograph introducing and discussing the problems of contemporary
men in various spheres of life was published in 2002. Manifestations of backlash in literary texts have various forms, one of them being the portrayal of women as “dangerous, castrating, holding the power, whereas men are lost, disorientated and deprived of power” observes Mrozik (107). Not infrequently men appear grotesque or are caricatured in those portrayals. Mrozik lists writers, such as the aforementioned Wojciech Kuczok’s Gnoj (2003), Marek Kochan’s Plac Zabaw (2007) or Dawid Bienkowski’s Bialo-czerwony (2007), as examples of works where such images of men can be found. “What those novels have in common” writes Mrozik “is that they attempt to show what happens to men who did not enjoy positive male patterns in their childhood” (110). The scholar points out that the conflict between fathers and sons exposes the clash between the traditional model of masculinity, authoritarian, uncompromising and menacing, with the qualities of a ‘new man’ viewed as emphatic, emotional, understanding and supportive, conveyed mainly in a new consumerist culture media. Mrozik’s approach stresses what was emphasized in the introduction to this chapter, namely the extent to which the commercial ideals of masculinity generated mainly by American and British media, penetrate the Polish reality together with the Capitalist ideologies of the West. This creates a split between nationalistic, tradition and past-orientated values and ideals with those considered liberal and from the “rotten West”, as it is often described in nationalistic circles (Kimmel, Hearn 155). In Raz. Dwa. Trzy, however, the male characters holding authority and those who are meant to provide models of masculine behaviour, such as fathers, are significantly absent. Those male characters with paternal roles who do appear, are frequently being ridiculed and humiliated as

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102 I’m referring to Zbyszko Melosik’s Kryzys męskości w kulturze współczesnej.
103 Translation, as well as paraphrasing, is mine.
was evident in the wife’s crushing critique of her husband’s qualities as a lover and father.

According to Maria Janion (2004), such a “demystification of the Father, works to expose the powers ascribed to his figure”. The critique of the father thus, symbolizes rejection of the patriarchal violence sanctioned by the religion, tradition and custom, which, in Janion’s view, constitutes the base of Polish society and enjoys respect among the majority of its members (Janion 15). Janion continues this subject in the introduction to the Polish edition of Elizabeth Badinter’s *XY. On Masculine Identity* (1993). In there, she states that the arrival of a ‘new man’ is close and that men “should question the ideals they inherited from their ancestors, recognizing the discomfort of patriarchy (...) and search for alternative patterns of masculinity and fatherhood” (14). Considering Janion’s call, the absence of the father or any other significant male figure for the boys in *Raz. Dwa. Trzy*, may indicate a rejection of the patriarchal values as was described by Janion. This absence however, may, more generally, reflect the lack of alternative patterns of masculinity, a result of the communist government propaganda of ‘gender equality’ followed by a complete neglect of issues of gender and sexuality in Polish discourse of the time, the issue on which the next section attempts to shed some light.

(Post)communist man?

*Raz. Dwa. Trzy* was published in 2007, thus it belongs to the contemporary literature written after 1989; yet, Klimko-Dobrzaniecki describes a period that was formative for today’s middle-aged men, such as himself. Since Klimko-Dobrzaniecki locates his male protagonists in the period before Poland’s transition from a communist (1945-89) to democratic system, it seems essential to look at how the communist
ideology and reality influenced gender ideology, specifically in relation to masculinity. In *The Post-Communist Condition* (2010), a sociological study of Polish society after transition, Aleksandra and Dariusz Galasinski point out that the condition of contemporary Polish men grows out of and relates directly to the masculine ideology before the transition (4). Significantly, according to Ewa Mazierska (2008) who refers to her study on Polish, Czech and Slovak films, after the fall of Communism which to a large extent abolished the ideological, political and social structures in which men previously operated, the change in representation of men was smaller than one could have expected: “still the prevailing image of a man is of a defeated or unfulfilled individual, although the nature of his failure differs from those during communist period” (Mazierska 217).

What is the condition of masculinity during Communism in Poland then? Perhaps the most telling answer is reflected in the neglect of discussion or discourse about gender during that time. In the conference paper “The Gender of Poland. The Specificity of Polish Feminism after 1989”, Magdalena Roguska - looking from the women’s perspective though - exposes the lack of interest in gender matters in pre-1989 Poland.

The communist system throughout the region forcefully promoted women’s emancipation both in the family and at work. This was supposed to be an alternative to the prior version of sexual equality. All forms of struggle for the abolition of sexual discrimination was declared pointless. After the legalization of abortion in 1956 (which generated the production of polemical and pro-choice texts) feminist voices died down. The state considered feminist demands fulfilled. “Western”
feminism was officially prohibited and, owing to this, until regime
transformation virtually absent in the Polish social life (Roguska 2).

Communist ideology worked to abolish all social differences, subjecting the society
to the idea of social equality by suppressing manifestations of nationalism, ethnic
diversity or class belonging. However, it was not dictated by the ideas promoting
tolerance but to subjugate and debase the society by the annihilation of its individual
needs and differences. “As the communist governments claimed absolute gender
equality in their societies, research on gender was seen as useless” write Agnieszka
and Dariusz Galasinski, who explain how communist countries claimed they were
‘genderless’ (3). It is crucial to emphasize that the avoidance of discussion of gender
in public life did not erase gender problems itself; the imposition of the communist
regime affected equally women and men. Following Galasinski’s, and others, claim
about communist countries genderlessness, the problem that arises is the following:
without ideologies of femininity or masculinity, what patterns and ideals are
available for women and men during communism and after? According to the
authors of “Men, Masculinities and “Europe”, which forms a chapter of Kimmel’s
aforementioned Handbook of Studies on Men and Masculinities, after the breakdown
of the socialist bloc most countries of the region have experienced “the resurgence of
nationalism that has incorporated the elements of an agrarian “return to tradition” (or
“roots”), together with an urban populist perspective of the “return of the nation” and
“transitional” feedback in the shape of a “return to Europe” (149).104 This return to

104 David Chioni Moore reconsiders the validity of postcolonial theory in application to the post-
Soviet countries in his article “Is the Post- in Postcolonial the Post- in Post-Soviet”. Notably, he also
indicates the ‘return to Europe’ factor, as an evidence of a colonial legacy in the Eastern and Central
Europe. Yet, he notices the specificity of post-Soviet countries colonial condition, rooted in the
specific for the region form of colonization: “This postcolonial compensatory tug plays out differently
in post-Soviet space, since post-colonial desire from Riga to Almaty fixates not on the fallen master
Russia but on the glittering Euramerican MTV-and-Coca-Cola beast that broke it. Central and Eastern
Europeans type this desire as a return to Westernness that once was theirs” (Moore 116). This desire
Europe – expressed even more strongly after former ‘communist’ countries succession to the European Union – has been demonstrated most visibly in the “re-masculinisation of public space” writes Kimmel demonstrating a similar view to that presented by Agnieszka Graff, who also talks about re-masculinization, in politics specifically. According to Kimmel, after the fall of Communism there is a noticeable effort of men to regain their political powers and for their country to achieve a respectable position within Europe; in other words, men are working out the ‘inferiority complex’ acquired during the communist era (Kimmel, Hearn 155). Even though men never disappeared from the public life, during the Soviet Communism the only possible career in public sphere was after joining the communist party; for Polish patriots this meant a betrayal.

Yet, this return to tradition and the past proves difficult in Poland since it requires coming to terms with a difficult heritage: mainly, Polish people’s involvement in atrocities and violence. Gender scholars, but also literary critics and historians, indicate connections between today’s politics of gender and sexuality to, primarily, communist and the Second World War periods. Kitlinski, Leszkowicz and Lockard in “Poland’s Transition: From Communism to Fundamentalist Hetero-Sex” argue that today’s nationalistic and heterosexist attitudes that, in their view, drive the majority of society have its origins in Poland’s shameful past and the refusal to acknowledge the guilt and shame (Kitlinski et.all 2005 “Poland’s Transition: From Communism to Fundamentalist Hetero-Sex” [online]). This unacknowledged shame appears to have at least two dimensions. On the one hand, it is the refusal to reconsider trauma related to life under the communist regime which used violent and

for the specific elements of pop-culture imagined as embodied Westernness is expressed by the characters in Raz. Dwa. Trzy.
humiliating methods of subjugating its criticizers that resulted in Polish society’s susceptibility to ‘pathological’ behaviours. According to literary scholar Hanna Gosk (2012), being exposed to the prolonged subjugation of the Soviet regime, to the “non-heroic everyday reality of the oppressed”, permanently changed the Polish individual and collective self. The condition of debasement into which the oppressed were pushed produced, in turn, “cynical mindsets, shamelessness and thoughtless conduct, or, at best, passive resignation” (Gosk 207).

On the other hand, some scholars, such as Norman Davies, recognize Poland’s participation in humiliating and intimidating others, and avoidance of taking the blame for shameless deeds, which is another aspect of the mentioned above unacknowledged shame. Davies (2001) finds surprising that after the transition in 1989 “no purge of the criminal elements of the Communist regime ever took place”. According to the historian, Poland missed an opportunity of cleansing, even symbolically, of the past by letting “the guilty ran free” (511-512). Kitlinski and Lockard, stress the involvement in persecuting and intimidating Jews, Gypsies and other ethnic and sexual minorities as determining factors of not only gender politics in today’s Poland but also of what they see as, a general crisis of identity (1). The unacknowledged shame, according to Kitlinski, Leszkowicz and Lockard appears formative, and as they indicate, destructive, for the Polish identity. However, the mechanism that led to today’s absence of narratives of shame and humiliation in recounting Poland’s history can be explained by Poland’s positioning towards other countries; more specifically, by being subjugated to oppressive regimes. This subject

105 The authors observe: “Poland has transitioned into fundamentalism, a condition where traditionalist verities constitute the body of knowledge worth knowing. Part of that tradition lies in national participation in the humiliation and intimidation of Others. (...) Abject subjects – women, gay, corpses – haunt fundamentalists. This is the ghostly return of their guilty past, guilty secrets. Poland’s unacknowledged crimes are skeletons in the cupboard of today’s crisis. (Kitlinski 6).
has been discussed in a volume *Kultura po przejściach, osoby z przeszłością* (2011) which examines Poland’s colonial past, mainly the impact on collective identity in Poland subjugated to regimes such as Nazism during the Second World War, and Communism after the war. In her article, included in this volume, Hanna Gosk explains that Poland’s tragic past contributed to the creation of various myths about Poland’s suffering, which drew upon the religious imaginary of martyrrology of Christ (Poland as a Christ of Nations) and patriotic discourses promoted by Polish Romantic literature. These factors determined the approach to the subject of shame usually placed in the context of victimhood; hence, silencing the narratives describing Poles acting as perpetrators. Gosk concludes “the narratives about shame do not fit into a literary framework dominated by the narratives about martyrrology and harm” (83).\(^\text{106}\)

As the sociologist Helen Lewis proposes, shame plays a key role in maintaining healthy social relationships; however, the unacknowledged shame leads to irrational and destructive behaviour: “shame causes pathological behavior only when it is denied” states Lewis (qtd.in Scheff and Ratzinger 104). This effect of unacknowledged shame is expressed in *Raz. Dwa. Trzy*. In one of the boys’ narratives, maintaining a somewhat naïve tone reflecting his young age, he describes people in town as “ordinary, just like me” (96). Yet, the portrayal of personas he further provides denies this statement. The “witchlike” pharmacist (95), the town’s madman wondering in the main square (96), deaf hair-dresser (98) and the local woman who spits on everything and everyone, expose the town’s deformation and

\(^{106}\text{An example illustrating a reluctance of Polish society to admit shame is a reaction to books by Tomasz Gross, especially his first publication *Neighbors*, which describes and provides evidence of the 1941 massacre of nearly 350 Polish Jews in Jedwabne, committed not by Nazis by Polish inhabitants of the town. A similar critical reaction was expressed at the filmic version of this event represented in Władysław Pasikowski film “Poklosie” [Aftermath], released in November 2012, followed by death threats sent to the main protagonist and his family after the film realise.}
disintegration. It is hard to resist the impression that bodily and mental disabilities of
the town’s inhabitants, their ‘abjected bodies’, represent the body of the society as a
whole. According to Elspeth Probyn, there is a bridge between personal experience
of shame and cultural practices for which the body is “a repository” of the social and
cultural rules. Shame, Probyn claims, is especially manifested in the bodies outside
the system, expelled, neglected and uncanny (Probyn 2005, 51). One of the
characters observes: “The parish grows. I grow. The city grows. Everything around
grows. But still we are the prisoners of this town” (RDT 73). What the protagonist
seems to be referring to when he talks about the imprisonment, are in fact the
attitudes in which the town people are encapsulated: sadness, perversion, anger and
violence. Moreover, we observe how, on one hand, humiliating others that is
apparent primarily in child-parent relationship becomes a predominant attitude, and,
on the other hand how shame, that is suppressed or hidden, generates, as Lewis
argues, pathological behaviours.

Becoming the abject

In Mazierska’s view, the evidence of failed men in artistic forms such as film, is
manifested in such representation of their bodies that evokes disgust or pity rather
than visual pleasure or arousal: “a clear indication of the dominance of injured or
defeated masculinity is the way male bodies are represented [in the Polish, Czech
and Slovak films she analyses]. Their authors [film directors] rarely allow the
viewers to enjoy the view of a naked man and when it happens, the spectacle is
dismal” (Mazierska 217). Mazierska’s insights are instructive in reading the bodies
in Raz. Dwa. Trzy. Those male characters’ bodies are portrayed as abjects: not only
their bodies appear in the context that evoke disgust or pity but also the protagonists
commit a number of transgressions that oppose or blaspheme the values promoted by the dominant patriarchal ideologies, such as religion, family or national traditions. One example of such 'shameful' blasphemy against Catholic values is the legend of Adam and Madam, a variation of the Biblical creation story, recounted to the Gay character by another gay man, Trytko, to whom the first is attracted. In Trytko's account of the events, God in the first instance created another man for Adam, and only when both men angered God, he created Eve as Adam's punishment, whereas another man, Madam, was expelled from Paradise (RDT 42-43). In another narrative, which introduces the Punk character, and where he admits to having an incestuous relationship with his cousin, the monologue of this teenage character is introduced:

Sin. And what is sin? Isn’t it only an excuse for inhibitions and complexes? Fuck all this. I can even burn in their hell but, before it happens, I want to have a bit of life in this world, to fuck, to drink and to smoke, because this is cool, because I'm a punk and I don’t give a shit;

I’m trash, but I live it up and it's wonderful (RDT 11).

Although rebellious in manifesting his contempt for inhibitions imposed by Catholic ideology, the character refers to himself as 'trash', thus somebody or something useless and polluting. Julia Kristeva, inspired by Mary Douglas' ideas of taboo and dirt as polluting matters, coined the term abjection; what transgresses the dominant ideas of what is considered acceptable is considered dirty, taboo or, indeed, the abject. In Powers of Horror, Kristeva expands on the meaning of abject: "it is thus

107 'Bóg, Honor, Ojczyzna' [God, Honour, Fatherland'] is one of the unofficial mottos of Poland, which indicates the values with which Poles have been identifying. The phrase originated around 16th or 17th century in Poland, and is commonly associated with Polish patriotism. Recently however, it has been used during the protest of nationalistic groups, such as Narodowe Odrodzenie Polski [National Revival of Poland].
not a lack of cleanliness or health that causes abjection but what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite” (Kristeva 4). The characters’ transgressions are further mirrored in the features of the texts; the story is split into three intertwining narratives, which critics viewed as “odd”, observes the writer: “[t]he critics didn’t like the narrative form split into three voices” (qtd. in CzeKański 313).

The fragmentation of the text, indeed, at times makes it difficult, or even impossible, to distinguish between the boys, despite the narrative style revealing diverse masculine subjectivities. Those are conveyed mainly through the varying language of their narratives. Tomasz Charnaś comments: “Klimko-Dobrzaniecki’s prose is to a large extent “live” speech, an engaging combination of the speakers’ innocence and the sharpness of their emotional judgments. It is unsettling, entertaining and moving” (Charnaś 2011 “One. Two. Three” [online]). The writer explains the purpose of such a stylistic choice: “I wanted to show a stream of consciousness of a punk, and how to do it otherwise than with a dirty and vulgar language of the street. (...) I decided to make the language of each character diverse and adjust it to each character’s mentality” (CzeKański 313). Indeed, the Punk character speaks bluntly and aggressively and his narrative is encrusted with vulgar and abusive expressions, such as was shown is his description of the intercourse with his cousin. His speech may emphasize his rebellious nature and express his general contempt for the surrounding communist reality. The Gay character’s ‘queerness’ is underlined by the characteristics such as gentleness and sensitivity, the qualities usually associated with femininity (‘soft man’); he is also good at reciting poetry. The evidence of his homoerotic desire is conveyed in his enjoyment of looking at and touching the body of one the clients of the hair salon (RDT 38). The Priest-To-
Be appears as somewhat nostalgic, sentimental and introvert. Those qualities are underlined in his attention to nature and detailed descriptions of the landscape that often corresponds with his feelings and that of the town’s people.

At the beginning of *Raz. Dwa. Trzy*, the boys are on their way to become men, finishing their schools, beginning their professional careers or trying to make decisions that will have an impact on their adult life. The author uses time inversion and confines the tales into mini-narratives; however, the story tends to go backwards. The middle section of the novel, divided into three parts, is dedicated to the earliest childhood experiences, whereas in the last section, the narrators are once again at the threshold of their adult life. The compositional technique confuses the issues of ‘beginning and end’ of each narrative creating a polyphonic effect through which the characters’ private experiences become more universal, perhaps, as something (arche)typical for all boys growing up in that place and that era. Although the spaces in the print indicate the end of one and beginning of another tale the reader is uncertain which character’s story he or she is following, until some details are revealed that enable the reference to one of them. This “anarchist composition” makes orientation in the text problematic at times; yet, it can be argued that those experiments with form reflect the characters’ disintegrated lives, their “sensual dilemmas” and their “permanent insecurity” about who they really are or ought to be, which is mirrored by the reader’s confusion of ‘who is who’ within the narrative (Wolny-Hamkało 2007 “Raz. Dwa. Trzy” [online]). The next two sections provide examples of how the characters’ bodies become the abject and how those abjected bodies of the characters’ can be viewed as reflecting specific social mindset, such as the sense of prolonged humiliation of Polish society by Communist government and
hostility towards otherness provoked by a long history of suppression to foreign regimes.

**Punk is not dead – fighting Communism**

In *Raz. Dwa. Trzy*, Klimko-Dobrzaniecki refers to the period of time when he happened to grow up – the last phase of Soviet communism, an alien force the presence of which was regarded as the shame of the nation.\(^{108}\) Poland was forced to turn to Communism because of its vulnerable position and the fear of renewed German attack: “The scars of the holocaust are in evidence everywhere in Poland, making it impossible to forget; and no matter what oppression is felt from the East Poles are forced into collaboration with the Soviet Union because of a deep fear – a national fear” (Sawicka-Brockie 73). In *Embattled Poland* (1982), Theresa Sawicka-Brocke argues that Poland under Communism emerges as inferior to the West: precisely because of the imposition of the Soviet regime the country suddenly found itself to be on the periphery of Europe, reflected in Sawicka-Brocke’s remark: “[Poles’] disaffection with the West because of Yalta had to be placed in the context of a feeling of degradation and humiliation that Poles have for its wider significance” (73). Significantly, Dariusz Galasinski (2010) refers to the abolition of Communism and Polish transition in 1989 as “the return to Europe” (2). It is often felt, however, that Poland, in a political discourse marked as an Eastern European country, is perceived as inferior by other (Western) European countries.\(^{109}\) It is, therefore, hard

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\(^{108}\) On the day marking the beginning of independence from the Soviet regime, Michael Kaufman wrote in *The New York Times*: “Stalin said that imposing Communism on Roman Catholic Poland was as absurd as putting a saddle on a cow. But after World War II, he went ahead and imposed it anyway, even though the roots of Communism in Poland had never run very deep” (“40 Years of Communism in Poland: Stalin’s House on a Soft Foundation”, August 18, 1989”).

\(^{109}\) The term, ‘Eastern European’, in itself reflects the marginalizing tendencies since geographically Poland is located in Central Europe.
to argue with Sabina Draga Alexandru’s (2001) claim that the current position of Eastern Europe is that it is perceived as both Europe and the other of Europe: it is thus “locked in a perpetual liminality” (1). From the end of the 18th century, Poland was under partitions between 3 Empires and disappeared from the map for 123 years. This, and later being subjugated to Communism, another oppressive regime, contributed to a strong position of nationalistic and patriotic discourses in Poland, which often glorify the country and its tragic past. Moreover, the long history of having to construct Polishness in opposition to the foreign oppressor, shaped national identity as predominantly hostile towards otherness.

Although in their stories the narrators refer mainly to their private experiences, the reality surrounding them appears alike. From their narratives emerges a picture of a gray and parochial town characterized by a “habituation of the culture of lack, ersatz and tackiness”, which in a major part was a heritage of Poland’s subjection to various regimes, Communism in particular, argues Hanna Gosk in “Counter-Discourse and the Postcolonial Perspective” (204). The real value of things is measured by their ‘Westernness’. In the novel, the duty-free shop Pewex, represents everything what was/is associated with the West: freedom, wealth and quality. Before the fall of the Iron Curtain, Pewex was the only place where one could buy Western goods such as cigarettes, Coca-Cola or jeans. The West, to which Poland once belonged and to which it aspires to belong in the future, securing its position, appears superior in the characters’ eyes. The Punk’s band is inspired by an English group, Sex Pistols whereas the Gay character wants to open a proper hair salon offering haircuts “from England” (RDT 193). We can observe how the fashions

110 Another, although speculative evidence of the writer’s engagement with the subject of oppression is the title of the novel, Raz, Dwa, Trzy [one, two three]. When translated into numbers, 123, it provides the number of years Poland was under partitions (1795-1918) and disappeared from the map of Europe.
and life style is being inspired by the Western patterns, including the ideas of what a man should look like (haircut) or how he should act.

In the novel, Communism is condemned, in particular, in the narrative of the Punk character. The emergence of punk subculture and its popularity at the time was a form of protest against the official communist propaganda. The music as well as fashion enabled young people to transgress the borders of prohibitions — a rebellious answer to the governmental politics of repressions, control and censorship. Punk’s music band Ebana Jera (the name of the band is the anagram of ‘jebana era’, which translates as ‘fucking’ or ‘fucked era’) performs songs whose lyrics express anger at the political system and generally on communist reality into which they are submerged (*RDT* 28). The character describes communism as utterly disgraceful and humiliating, demonstrating hatred to anyone supporting the ideology. His classmate, “a son of communist parents”, also referred to as a “communist prick”, is severely ‘punished’ by the punk and his friend for founding a branch of Youth Communist Organization in that same school (*RDT* 21). The Punk refers to this person as victim, oftara, which in Polish language expresses two meanings. One signifies the victimhood, being oppressed by a person or ideology whereas another meaning emphasizes the incapability of acting, or, with regard to men, emasculation. Both meanings imply passivity, inferiority and powerlessness. Both those meanings are embodied in the discourses of victimhood and martyrology, dominant in recounting Polish history narratives. Hanna Gosk observes that despite Poland’s having been free and sovereign since 1989, the national imagination continues to be influenced by Romantic ideology (Polish Romanticism), which responded to colonization by Russian, German and Hungarian Empires in the nineteenth century. Romantic discourse was dominated by the patriotic images of men as heroes and fighters.
standing up for their country, as well as “an idealized construct of the Homeland”. As Gosk argues, that idealized construct of the Homeland (...) tends to eliminate non-heroic alternative narratives, which could generate a sense of shame or guilt” (Gosk 2011 “Notions of "Homeland" in Recent Polish Prose”, conference paper).111

Can it be said that an externally imposed authority or regime shames the subjugated nation and society, for this nation is forced into powerlessness and made dependent and inferior? If we think about the traditional construct of masculinity as representing strength, authority and dominance can we say that any society that is being a subject to externally imposed power, is forced into passivity and thus emasculated? And how this collective emasculating shame refers to the individual men and their sense of self? In the novel, the emasculating quality of communism corresponds with the punk character’s private story of being emasculated by his cousin. After the death of his mother, he is being raised only by his father, who is occupied with finding ‘new aunties’ rather than looking after his son. “There are many aunts visiting the father. These aunts aren’t any family... Almost each week a different aunt is coming” comments the boy who can hear their groaning at nights (RDT 103). The boy spends most of the weekends in the house of his father’s sister playing with his cousin, Sylwia. The two youngsters, without any attention from adults, indulge in the ‘doctor game’, during which they examine and discover each other’s bodies. One day, Sylwia, a few years older and more experienced than the Punk, examines his genitals and diagnoses that the boy’s penis cannot get erect. The boy, although not aware of what it means, seems terrified at hearing the news, sensing however he is some kind of a failure. Since he would not like to disappoint his cousin he becomes preoccupied with the ‘flabby penis’ and the ability to perform.

111 The most significant and influential writer of Polish Romanticism period is Adam Mickiewicz (1798-1855).
sexually becomes his obsession. This is evident in the scene where the boy learns to masturbate, he instantly recalls Sylwia, to whom, in his mind, he addresses such words: “This is the end of the flabby that couldn’t stand up. Yes, Sylwia, it happened, it stood and it was very pleasant” (RDT 54).

Nevertheless, one day, when the Punk is mature enough, he and his cousin become lovers; yet, it is hard to resist the impression that the dominant emotion on the boy’s part is rage. Their encounters are described only in terms of sex, or something that could only be described as degrading and humiliating copulation, where the supposed feelings for the cousin are replaced by the obsession to satisfy her sexually or, presumably, to reassure his own potency and power after the emasculating experience of failed erection. The language used to describe their sexual encounters expresses the need to perhaps degrade and demonstrate his power and control over the girl:

\[\text{Punk is not dead! I’m fucking my cousin. I took her virginity right after the sanatorium. She bled like a bitch in heat, she howled, and I fucked and fucked her. She wanted it herself. I fucked her so hard that I almost smashed her bottom. Then she had to walk bow-legged for a week … She also likes to have a ride in her ass. With a cream, butter, oil anything that gives you a skid. You can shoot your load there without worries about babies. There can be no babies, too close kinship… (Klimko-Dobrzaniecki’s italics, RDT 8, 9)}\]

This single narrative breaks many taboos: social, religious but also literary. The fragment is encrusted with swear words, insults and inappropriateness to such an extent that it becomes embarrassing to read. The protagonist’s portrayal of the intercourse presents it as a violent act in which he however takes pleasure. Moreover,
he describes his cousin as "bleeding like a dog", "howling" and "screaming" during their intercourse and boasts about, how she could not walk for a week after this act of 'love' (*RDT* 8). Her personal qualities are not expressed in this fragment. Although the style attempts to be ironic and funny, the Punk’s speech most likely appears to reflect his general need to humiliate, if not damage his cousin, more likely to have a feeling he, in this way, gains control and strength. As psychologist James Gilligan observes in “Shame, Guilt and Violence”, people resort to violence when they feel that they can “wipe out shame only by shaming those who they feel shamed them” (Gilligan 1163). This character’s attitude, thus, could be perceived as one of the strategies of masking a deep shame and fear of being impotent. Notably, in the above passage, the character ties his political stance, expressed in the famous call of punk subculture ‘punk is not dead’, with the sexual act. This symbolic connection appears meaningful in the light of the previous discussion about men feeling emasculated and empowered by Communism evident in their attempt to regaining their position in the post-communist society.

The Punk’s ‘toughness’ may also result from being neglected by his father and by father’s demands from his son to act ‘like a man’ by hiding his feelings. Not visible, the feelings are easier to ignore; that appears the father’s strategy of not having to look after his son. This is evident during the long walk to the swimming pool, when the father ignores his son’s tiredness:

*I have enough of those our trips [to the mountains], those
tightmarish walks, I feel he wants to punish me, take revenge on me during those trips. But why, I didn’t do anything or maybe he is just taking revenge for the fact that I exist, that he has had me, that he has to be with me and is tied up to me* (*RDT* 167).
After the death of the Punk’s mother, his father, as a single parent, is exposed as completely unable to provide support of any kind for his son. He ignores his son’s most basic needs, including boy’s nutrition since every day the boy goes to school supplied with strawberry jam sandwiches, which are his only diet at home too. The father’s neglect becomes visible as physical dirt since the character describes his image as a schoolboy: “I’m dirty and I eat jam sandwiches” (103). This characteristic - visible dirt - is most likely a source of embarrassment, if not shame, particularly that it is, according to the character, noted by other people. In Anatomy of Disgust (1998), Ian Miller describes the interrelation between shame and disgust indicating “shame” as a “response to others disapproval”, whether manifested as contempt or disgust. On the other hand, when shame is felt it often leads to self-loathing, thus disgust with oneself and as such “the physical sensations of shame and disgust are indistinguishable” claims Miller (34). Since from an early age the Punk was made to believe he was inadequate and a disturbance, unworthy of his father’s love it is no surprise therefore that, when older, he refers to himself as ‘trash’, a term expressing self-loathing and internalized disgust of himself.

Although the teenage Punk’s behaviour appears shameless and violent, to a certain extent, his behaviour is determined by the distorted relationship with his father. Mario Jacoby (1996) writes how the early childhood, especially the child-parent relationship, provides the most significant source of self-esteem and self-confidence, of which deficiency is the root cause of susceptibility to shame and the inferiority complex. Similarly, Leon Wurmser in The Mask of Shame (1981) indirectly points at the significance of experience with family and those with whom we form close relationships by stating that the basic experience of shame relates to “the pain of feeling of being unloved and unlovable” (97). Jacoby draws attention to
the ties of shame to one’s social context, for shame revolves around the question of "what respect I enjoy in others’ eyes and what effect they have on my sense of worth as a person" ("Introduction" viii). It is worth noticing that ideas of inferiority and neglect as described by psychologists such as Jacoby are parallel to the notions of, adequately, minority and periphery, which are terms used in sociological and cultural studies. Scholars across disciplines indicate these spheres as areas where shame flourishes. The relationship with our parents also provides the main source of where we learn the attitude towards our bodies. Katharine Young states in "The Memory of the Flesh" (2002) that bodies are passed down in families. Parents offer children a model of how to be and how to relate to the world, which takes the form of corporeal attitudes: "the body is one of our family traditions" (26).112 Yet, the body is not a mere passive containment of the past, because as Young remarks “this haunting of our own bodies by the bodies of others is constant, a persistent familiar in our ordinary lives” (45). Hence, the body serves as a map on which we can find the embodiment of individual experience, but also the experience of one’s family and the history. Young statements echoes Elspeth Probyn’s (2005) approach to the body as a container of the history and habitus, which becomes most evident in the feeling of shame, in which all those past experiences come alive, as Probyn observes (40).

What can be learnt from the characters tales in Raz. Dwa. Trzy, is that their parents teach them to neglect their bodies and that their bodies are a source of shame as dirty and defective. Moreover, the boys are degraded and humiliated by the

112 As a somatic psychologist, Young’s role is to trace the past – which as she emphasises, we do not necessary experience or participate in directly - on her patients bodies. This ‘bodily’ analysis reveals the truth not only about the self but also about the ancestors: “My body is constituted not only out of my imaginary anatomy but also out of others’, other bodies toward whom I yearn. Of course these acts of the imagination, too, are embodied experiences but not embodied experiences of the world. They are embodied experiences of a body that holds the world to me in a certain configuration. I materialize in my body the ghosts of my ancestors; my flesh inhabits other images. My body is forfeit to a past it has only partially enacted” (Young 45).
members of their community such as described by the Gay character in the scene where he is being sexually abused by his neighbour:

Zielinska grabbed my head, steered my nose in her forest and asked me to lick it. (…) In the end, I heard her screaming and I felt a stream of warm liquid ramming straight into my face, all over my eyes. Zielinska was urinating at me. She was urinating and didn’t want to stop. When I stepped back, repulsed, she pulled me towards her stomach and used my body to smear the piss all over her body. She said I’m going through christening and was soon to become a man while instantly grabbing my penis she began moving it rhythmically

(RDT 114).

Klimko-Dobrzaniecki describes a scene of rape of the character, who, driven by curiosity about a female body, finds himself forced into intercourse. The scene’s description stretches on for four pages of the novel and focuses mainly on the physical details of Zielinska’s body and detailed description of the sexual act. The boy’s reaction during the incident is, at first, that of curiosity mixed with excitement but it is soon transformed into disgust expressed in the portrayal of Zielinska’s body who’s breasts are referred to as “bombs” or “cabbages” with nipples like a “cat’s poo”. Her pubic hair is “coarse and disgusting” and her secretions are described as “sticky gunk” (RDT 112). The selection of such comparisons can be attributed to the writer’s attempt of stylizing the language to that of a teenage boy, most likely twelve or thirteen, represented by the naivety of the recalled images. However, the grotesque image of the woman’s body and indeed the whole scene seems appropriate aesthetics to indicate a moral, or even legal, transgression and to evoke feelings of repulsion towards the adulterous act into which the boy is being forced.
In *The Female Grotesque* (1994), Mary Russo observes that the grotesque body represents the abjected and uncanny bodies, those rejected from the bodily canons. They are usually identified with the lower body stratum that is associated with "degradation, filth, death and rebirth" (Russo 8). The act of urinating into the boy's face in the finale of the scene, the character describes as "the most disgusting thing" that had ever happened to him and to which he reacts somatically by throwing up on his neighbour's body (*RDT* 114). Even though the 'pollution', the 'dirt' is inflicted from the outside against the character's will, it leaves a mark, a stigma on the body, which cannot be effaced. Hence, the body becomes an abject. In his research dedicated to rape, Bülent Diken writes: "[t]he rape victim often perceives herself [himself] as an abject, as a 'dirty', morally inferior person" (113). The abjects are seen as something that threatens normality and morality: "in a culture that celebrates order, hierarchy and guarded borders, abjects tend to be perceived in a negative light, as disgusting, ugly, anxiety-provoking, sick, unhealthy and so on" remarks Diken who emphasizes the communal aspect of abjection (Diken 113). In the above scene of rape, the dirt represented in the body of Zielinska is passed onto this character's body through the act of defilement, which in the description of rape is emphasized by the presence of the urine and vomit. That is how the character's body becomes an abject. As it was said previously abjected male bodies may indicate a problematic condition of contemporary Polish masculinity. Perhaps masculinity, analogous to the new position of homeland, with which traditional Polish masculinity has been strongly identified, is also locked, as Draga Alexandru expressed that, in 'perpetual liminality', somewhere between the patriotic and heroic past of the forefathers, castrating reality of the fathers and the new liberal, West-orientated masculinity, which considers the ideas promoted by feminist discourses.
Gay shame, Silesia’s otherness and the question of belonging

The narrative of the Gay character revolves around the relationship with his overprotective and nagging mother, who exposes his ‘otherness’. The mother says to the character: “You have to write with the right hand... You can’t be a ‘mankut’, you can’t shame me, do you understand? (RDT 63-64)”. The boy lives in fear that one day his mother will fulfill her promise of dying if he keeps upsetting her and he is terrified with the prospect of being left alone (60). Therefore, he tries to meet all his mother’s demands, even at the cost of being humiliated. In order to keep her son at home, to herself, the mother engages her son in various activities such as, for instance, crocheting, which the boy hates. The character is being raised without a father, who, in the conversations between the mother and her son, appears a taboo subject.

However, the mother calls herself “father-mother” since as she says, she herself needs to take care of everything on her own (60). The son is too scared to protest to his mother’s acts, which often ridicule the boy in front of others, such as for instance, when she forces him to wear an ugly beret in which she considers him to look like “a princess”: [the mother says] “How beautiful you are, how pretty you look in this beret and the scarf, almost like a girl. Like a girl...” (RDT 62). The character protests against wearing this “effeminate” garment for he fears “the whole playground will laugh at me” but still the mother forces her son into her idea of a “little princess” (RDT 61).

The character’s left-handedness becomes the mother’s obsession as she sees it as a proof of her son’s difference. Therefore, the mother stubbornly tries to eradicate

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113 In Polish ‘mankut’ is a pejorative term for a left-handed person.
what she sees as a ‘flaw’. When the character fails to write with his right hand the
mother explodes with rage: “What do you think you shitty left-hander? You want to
live backwards, inversely, from right to left, with twisted and reversed ideas…?”
(RDT 63). Soon she reveals the source of her frustration: the absent father and the
burden of having to raise a child on her own, which turns into a resentment and
hatred of all men: “This way [left-handed]…this is your father’s doing..” (RDT 63).
She releases her frustration by punishing her son’s inability to write ‘properly’ by
beating his left hand with a stick (RDT 64). However, the mother’s rage is
incommensurate with the boy’s ‘defect’ and therefore should encourage the reader to
seek a different cause of her aggressive behaviour. In The Culture of Shame (1998),
the psychologist Andrew Morrison explains how frequently one’s own shame lies
masked in aggressive and violent behaviours towards others. Most often this is the
case within families: “with its accompanying “sentence” of passivity, failure, and
weakness, shame begets violence. The person who feels shame may lash out in rage,
attempting to break the external or internal shackles that are causing the shame in the
first place” (Morrison 95). The psychologist observes that usually the family member
is being scapegoated as the cause of shame that is about something else. In the
following reflections, the Gay character notices the behaviour discussed by Morrison
in his mother:

And my mum? She also imprisoned herself and now she makes up the
ideology to the sentence she pronounced upon herself years ago. If it’s
all right and it won’t be better than, why all these tears, tears of sadness,
bitterness, why all this aggression? She wanted to have me, even when
she got laid, it means she wanted it, and in wanting it she thought about
happiness, that is, about me, I was going to be her happiness, and it was
meant to be good, even without a father. Why my life is a nightmare, why she is enraged, lets her steam off on me, why she wanted to force me to write with the right hand while I'm left-handed and why am I supposed to hate men for all that? Something is growing inside me. I don’t know what yet, some kind of anxiety, evil, I’m accumulating it. How many years will I have to gather somebody’s guilt inside me? Do I have a right to my own self? (RDT 74).

The source of the negative emotions demonstrated by the mother is recognized by the character as accumulating 'somebody’s guilt' The mother is ‘imprisoned' in the feelings of unhappiness and sadness described as a kind of disease, which further causes her violent behaviour. At the same time, guilt is shown as being passed from generation to generation (here from the mother to her son) not rarely in the form of anger and hatred. According to Leon Wurmser, shame and guilt are antithetical: whereas guilt is a response to strength and power, shame is a response to weakness and impotence. Hence, the feeling of guilt may serve as a defence against shame. Doing shameless, inappropriate things may make one feel guilty, yet it can be one of the strategies of masking a deeper injury; a strategy which was also discussed with regard to Alex Portnoy’s behaviour as well. In Klimko-Dobrzaniecki’s story, the mother seems to be carrying a deep shame about her failed relationship, absent father and her own unhappiness which she projects on her son’s left-handedness and general fear her son may grow different than other people. The mother appears caught in what Helen Block Lewis (1971) refers to as a “feeling trap”, meaning that a person is caught in the mechanism of having emotional reactions to one’s own emotions, and then further reactions to reactions. Such as being ashamed of being ashamed, which causes shame loops that are reproduced ad infinitum. Lewis
discusses a specific kind of “feeling trap” – shame leading to anger – which then leads to further shame. This emotional loop can “lead to explosive violence, and it can persist over a lifetime as what is called bitter hatred”, which, notably, is the feeling ascribed by the Gay character to his mother in the passage above (105). Such hatred can be passed down from parents to children in the form of racial, religious, and national prejudices, adds Lewis. From that perspective, the mother’s violent behaviours and anger can be explained in terms of the general obsession and fear of ‘otherness’ as well as her own emotion of shame projected at her son’s left-handedness.

The Gay character’s otherness feared by his mother corresponds with the otherness of the town, on which he – and other two characters as well – repeatedly comments. Various personas appearing in the characters’ narratives underline the ethnic diversity of Silesian society but also its disintegration. Those are, for instance, the Ukrainian physical education teacher, who was “sent into this Western exile a hundred years ago” (13) but still cannot speak Polish properly. In the same school, the teacher displays a showcase of national [Polish] tokens, the past still present in the ‘now’ as he calls it, of which traces can be found spread all over the region and town. However, the narrator has a problem to identify with these ‘national’ symbols for he observes:

But now I’m not sure whose memory he [the teacher] wants to represent in here. Ours or the Germans’? Since all these showcases are full of fascist artifacts. Helmets, gas masks, iron crosses, uniforms, photographs, military distinctions and only one Polish

114 According to Lewis’ theory, the emotions such as hatred and resentment are perceived as a part of shame-anger loop (shame bound by anger), with the anger directed outward, at others, whereas guilt is seen as a variant of shame-anger sequence, where the anger is directed at the self.
striped suit from Gross-Rosen; well, but what else can you gather in once-German town. Our city was spared, not a one bomb fell on it, not even once did anyone shoot a bullet, and later there was a quick exchange of its citizens, and all those helmets, masks, and uniforms, untouched, almost like a new, were left behind as souvenirs (23). The character touches upon difficult Polish-German relations represented by the objects displayed in the showcase that are its symbols: the striped suit and gas masks bring to mind the Holocaust whereas the other objects evoke a general memory of the wars. The above narrative questions the Polishness of this Silesian town, which although inhabited by Poles appears haunted not only by German memories but also memories of Germans. The city appears a palimpsest, of which ‘body’ was scraped off of Germanness and is being desperately inscribed with Polish symbols and traditions, such as shown in the teacher’s attempts.

In the following narrative of the Gay character, the ‘ghost’ of Germanness of the place, reappears – or perhaps it is constantly present – in the description of the hair salon, in which the protagonist is mastering his skills as a future hair dresser. The images displayed on the wall of the hair salon are old-fashioned – the character calls them a “shame” – yet, he suspects that the owner of the salon keeps them on display for “German tourists”, the usual clients of the salon (RDT 34). When they come on a trip to the town which was once their own, they ask to style their hair in the same manner as on the displayed photographs. The character reflects on that: “Maybe then they remember the old times, maybe then they experience a momentary metamorphosis and they go back to those times when the city belonged to them, when each of them had such a hairstyle, with brilliantine rubbed into it…” (RDT 35). Those elements of German past create a general mood of the place, in which the
prevailing emotions are sadness and nostalgia, but also a sense of not belonging and of being a stranger in this land; an experience, to which the characters most likely react somatically. In *Blush* (2005), Elspeth Probyn introduces a variant of shame she refers to as “the shame of being out-of-place”. She explains it as a feeling that the body registers in a cultural and social context when it does not belong. She draws her ideas on Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of *habitus* which illustrates how we embody history: “The body is a repository for the social and cultural rules that, consciously or not, we take on. Our bodies can also tell us when we have stumbled into other people’s history, culture, and beliefs of which we are ignorant” (Probyn “Introduction” xvi). However, in *Raz, Dwa, Trzy*, it is not simply the matter of stumbling into German people’s history and culture because as evident from the novel, both countries are being stuck in a complex relationship.

This Silesian town inhabited by the protagonists is post-German and this creates a somewhat paradoxical emotional landscape for most people.115 Those who moved into the houses, previously owned by the expelled Germans, inherited not only their properties but also the emotions with which the building are incrusted. In *Raz, Dwa, Trzy*, the memories of the past are incorporated in the landscape: buildings and structures transmit ‘feelings’. The Gay character observes: “All houses on our street were the same. They carried the sadness of the expelled inside them. They say, that houses soak the feelings, and that they reflect their owners, the weather and the

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115 As a result of the post-war border changes most of the ethnic Germans that had been settled there for centuries were expelled from the region, which was now inhabited by Polish settlers, most of whom had themselves been expropriated and forcefully expelled from the former eastern parts of Poland called Kresy. The political changes caused lots of resentment between people of different nations, who were forced to move their homes and leave the land, where they felt they belonged. Moreover, many Polish settlers found having to reside in the land previously inhabited by their biggest ‘enemy’ shameful and humiliating. with German inscriptions and being surrounded by other ‘markers’ of Germanness placed them in an uncomfortable psychological position, if not, to a certain degree, unbearable position. At the same time Germans had to abandon their houses and all goods for the citizens of the nation they had occupied for a hundred and thirty years, until the end of the First World War.
history of the place” (92). If the houses are soaked with emotions, people, mostly Poles, who moved into German houses after the Second World War, experience not only the nostalgia for those expelled but also share German guilt and shame at the crimes committed during the war. The shame seems to be double, since Poles themselves are not blameless in participating in the war crimes, in particular in persecuting Jews during and after the war. One of the examples is the Jedwabne massacre, documented in Jan T. Gross’s book Neighbors. The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland (2001). Silesia is a region of many historical scenes of shame, with concentration camps, such as Auschwitz (pol. Oświęcim) incorporated in the landscape. Those are the constant reminders of the violent acts and committed crimes.

In Raz. Dwa. Trzy, Klimko-Dobrzaniecki does not mention Auschwitz directly, however, Auschwitz is present precisely in this silence as an unspeakable shame: in Sawicka-Brockie’s comment “the Polish landscape is marked with the stigma and shame of what happened in those camps” (73). According to Theodor Adorno, Auschwitz is not an event that had passed but it is perpetually present across time and place. This statement stays in concert with the claims of trauma theorists, such as Cathy Caruth or Shoshana Felman, who point out that “the trauma of one individual can haunt later generations, so that we who never directly experienced the camps are nevertheless imagined as continuously experiencing or “inheriting” the traumatic memories of those who died a long time ago” (qtd. in Leys 164). Nobel Prize winner, Czesław Miłosz diagnoses Poland’s failure to admit guilt and shame of their indifference in the face of suffering of Jews, in the poem Campo di Fiori (1943). In his poem he expresses a death of moral values, “the passing of things human”, accusing his compatriots of being “ill with their own innocence”. Due to
open criticism of Polish people’s anti-Semitism, Miłosz became one of those authors who divide the critics into those who admire his work and those who perceive his views as deeply offensive, in particular to Polish nationalists.\textsuperscript{116} The attitude towards Miłosz who cast a shadow over the Polish heroic past is another example of the discursive politics described by Gosk, which favours discourses of heroism and not of shame.

In the similar mode as buildings incorporate the history and ‘remember’ the events in Raz, Dwa, Trzy, the characters’ emotions such as resentment, anger and contempt become somatic, ‘carried in their bodies’. In the novel, people of the town are filled with resentment for Germans in front of whom they experience a kind of humiliation but also fear that the neighbours may return one day demanding their properties\textsuperscript{117}. The scene of German tourists coming to town captures this emotional discomfort of Poles who feel inferior in front of them. “German women” throw down some candies and money for children who run “like wild animals” to pick the sweets whereas the tourists laugh loudly, taking pictures (119). The scene presents Germans as having a sense of superiority over their neighbour, culturally and materially impoverished by Communism. This image evokes also the propaganda filming carried out by Nazi soldiers in the concentration camps, another, it seems, allusion to the difficult Polish-German relations.

Yet, Klimko-Dobrzaniecki links Polish and German histories already in the opening narrative where one of the characters comments on the lime trees, a

\textsuperscript{116} When Miłosz died in Cracow on 14 August 2004, the ultra-nationalist All-Polish Youth Party members protested against the planned burial of the poet in the historic abbey of Skalka.

\textsuperscript{117} Erika Steinbach, a member of conservative Christian Democrats in German Parliament, dedicated all her career to documenting the suffering of Germans expelled from Eastern Europe (mostly Poland) following WWII. Her campaign demanding that Poland should pay compensation to the victims (the expelled) justifies only the fear of Polish society of Germans’ demands. (The absurdity of those demands lie in the fact that since the end of the WWII Poland was under Soviet Communist Regime and all political decisions were dictated by Soviet Russia).
ubiquitous element of the landscape in that part of Poland: “the one who planted them was a son of a nation for whom doing things precisely, neatly and on time meant a lot”, suggesting the qualities stereotypically ascribed to Germans. The narrator also makes a comparison to Berlin’s famous road “Unter den Linden” [under the lime trees] (8). Later on, the same character, reflects on the persistence of the past and memories which cannot be simply erased:

I don’t believe that you can get rid of some images, especially when you’ve decided to remain in the same town. (...) And if you forgot or don’t want to remember, other people will remind you. Even if someone will cut the lime trees and destroy the building, there would always be someone who will remind you where did you live, what you saw, how it smelled and how it passed away. The memories don’t die with people. Passed from generation to generation they are alive and they will last in those who will come after us, same as the history of our lime trees which weren’t ours, and as the history of the tables around those trees, that also weren’t ours (RDT 130-131).

By including the ‘other’, constructed mainly as Polish enemy, as an inseparable part of Polish reality he describes, the writer rejects the nationalistic and essentialist mythology of Polish purity. He also seems to succeed in portraying the collective experience of shame impacting on individual lives.

Conclusion

Since the beginning of this research on shame in 2010, Hubert Klimko-Dobrzaniecki has published three novels and republished a collection of three earlier works, gradually becoming one of the significant male voices in contemporary Polish
Six of his books have been translated into French, two into Italian (the second is due to appear in 2014), and some have been published in Serbian, Icelandic, Bulgarian and Slovak; an English translation of one is under way. 

While the writer’s texts finds its way to European audiences, establishing his position within the Polish literary market appears more complex mainly due to challenges to classify his works into one category. For the past fifteen years the writer has been living outside Poland yet, only one of his novels describes his experience of emigration, and he writes his fiction in Polish and publishes them in Poland. At the same time, in his books he introduces characters of different nationalities and ethnicities, merges elements of foreign cultures and histories with Polish culture, thus expands the borders of local and national. By dedicating his works to those excluded and marginalized, sexual and ethnic minorities, he mainly questions Polish essentialism manifested in the politics of exclusion of any ‘otherness’ or deviation from Polishness. At the same time, he engages with the subject of shame by positioning his characters at the margins, peripheries, thus drawing attention to the most ‘vulnerable’ places, where shame remains hidden, and thus, powerful.

As it was shown in this chapter, shame in Poland is hidden, or to use the words of Gershen Kaufman (1989): “there is shame about shame and so it remains under strict taboo” (32). Yet, the characters of Klimko-Dobrzaniecki’s novel reveal intimate problems, anxieties and failures and in their confessions they do not spare the reader physiology-related naturalistic details, talk openly about those aspects of the human body considered a deepest taboo, such as intimate parts of the body or secretions, and do not refrain from using ‘ugly’ or ‘dirty’ expressions to portray those. In this context, Raz. Dwa. Trzy appears a transgression, first of all, by openly

[118 http://authors-translators.blogspot.co.uk/]
engaging with the subject of shame, but also by exposing issues that rarely, if at all, appear in public dispute. Moreover, the male characters admit to feeling shame, and are often presented as victims of other people’s abuse and degradation. Through the process of queering, such as introducing plurality of male subjectivities into his text, the writer challenges the Polish patriarchal values: religious, familial and national and equally the models of masculinity offered by them. Paweł Leszkowicz writes that “the discovery or just imagining of post-patriarchal masculinity play a psychoanalytic and strongly political role in a culture where official media and political rhetoric is based on fundamentalist, archaic, and homophobic models of manhood and boyhood” (Leszkowicz 2006 “Queer Story of Polish Art and Subjectivity” [online]). By attaching shame, an emotion traditionally attached to femininity, to male bodies the writer breaches a typical discourse of representing masculinity, as was described by Leszkowicz. This appears the writer’s subversive way of conveying his critique of dominant patriarchal ideologies which sanction nationalism, fundamentalism, violence, and heteronormativity as a norm for the Polish male ideal. Klimko-Dobrzaniecki rejects those by opening his characters towards the translational models of masculinity, mainly from Western countries, which the characters negotiate together with the offered national models. This negotiation indicates a new condition of gender in Poland, but masculinity in particular, which although positioned in-between West and East, more and more is becoming informed by the global trends.
CONCLUSION

‘Masculinity crisis’?

The September cover of Newsweek Polska features a naked, shrunken man crouching under a black high-heeled shoe, presumably that of a woman. Above the image the title reads: “What’s [wrong] with Polish masculinity?” (see appendix 3). Inside the magazine, different specialists, psychologists, sexologists and doctors who deal with men as their patients report the issues faced by Polish men. These issues are depression caused by the new demands of contemporary capitalist society, fear of women, feeling that they have failed as fathers and lovers, complexes about their body image, in particular preoccupation with the small size of their penises. The latter complex, highlight the specialists, has been influenced predominantly by men’s confrontation with the images of machine-like, erected penises that feature in pornographic films. Furthermore, Newsweek’s image of a man being under a woman’s shoe, in Polish pod pantojlem, stands for a man being ‘domesticated’ by a woman and being under her control, thus, may have potentially ridiculing and humiliating overtones. On the other hand, it could be viewed as a call for men to man up and to stand up to women.

In one of the Newsweek’s interviews, psychologist and feminist Hanna Samson claims the real problem with masculinity is men’s denial of their ‘softness’, that is, in her view, denial of emotionality and sensitivity, perceived as unmanly.

119 The original title is “Co z tą polską męskością?”, Newsweek Poland no. 38, September 2013.
Samson's remark highlights that shame and the desire for belonging condition men's behaviour towards women and other men. On the one hand, as the psychologist points out, men would like to express their emotions but they fear being considered unmanly by other men, or women. On the other hand, since they desperately need to reassure their manliness, and secure their belonging, they perform hard masculinity even though they may not want to.

It has been a satisfaction for the author of this thesis that the *Newsweek* issue on masculinity coincided with the completion of this study on male shame. Remarkably, the image of a diminished man on Newsweek's cover evokes the imagery, introduced at the beginning of this study, of the soldier Rio whose shrinking was caused by the feeling of shame and who was also punished with 'shrinking to death' for manifesting the emotion. Shrinking thus symbolises diminishment of someone's role, position or status, but equally, as is now evident from my reading of Hanif Kureishi, Hubert Klimko-Dobrzaniecki and Philip Roth's texts, it is a manifestation of the feeling of shame. The characters in the analysed novels touch upon all the issues listed by *Newsweek*, and using the language of the magazine it could be concluded that these novels indicate masculinity is in a deep crisis.

The voices indicating that masculinity is somehow threatened are however not exclusive merely to the Polish context. In May 2013, the debate on the masculinity crisis in Britain spread from academia to the popular media. In a number

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120 Samson observes that the denial of softness in men as unmanly has been encouraged by the dominant Polish cultural model of hard masculinity, a tough man, who does not manifest his emotions. Samson proposes many men are ready to change this view as they often feel uncomfortable with this pattern of behaviour, yet, they are afraid to speak about it openly precisely because of the fear of being considered soft (thus, unmanly). In September 2013, Samson published a book *Zabić twardziela* [Kill the tough guy], where she attempts to deconstruct the stereotype of tough guy by looking into the processes that contributed to the creation of such an ideal.
of public speeches, the British shadow health minister, Diane Abbot, claimed the crisis of masculinity in Britain – manifested in heartlessness, men’s hyper-masculinity, homophobia and misogyny – is caused by the pressures of rapid economic and social changes, which provoke machismo and misogyny among men. She warns that generations of men unclear of their social role are under a great pressure to live up to “pomified ideals” of masculinity (Abbot “Britain’s Crisis of Masculinity” 7). Despite concerns about the condition of masculinity in Britain, Abbot’s rhetoric is not helpful for men and it could even be argued that it is damaging. Although she claims women are being wrongly blamed by men for the situation, she also talks about her father’s generation, which “prided themselves on being providers - for their spouses, families and themselves” evoking the nostalgia for the old, patriarchal forms of masculinity as juxtaposed with the present, characterized, in Abbot’s view, by “normalisation of homophobia”, where “hard work, love, community, and family are no longer necessarily part of a British right of passage” (5). It is important to stress that Abbot’s speech represents values of heteronormative society and represents typical backlash thinking since she justifies men’s “lack of respect for women’s autonomy” with men’s experience of their own insecurity in the new social conditions. Speaking of a masculinity crisis evokes the idea of some kind of pre-crisis masculinity, imagined by Abbot as a stable concept, with men’s secure social roles and them not being pressured by the demands of a

121 Abbot’s speech delivered during the twentieth anniversary of Demos on 16th of May, was introduced in The Guardian’s article “British male identity crisis ‘spurring machismo and heartlessness’”, which cites the most remarkable of Abbot’s statements. In a different article published by The Guardian a day later, Glen Pole discusses the potential negative impact of Abbot’s speech on perception of feminism and its achievements (“How tackling the ‘crisis of masculinity’ creates a crisis for feminism”).
changing society; in the words of Hashemi Yekani, Abbot “reproduces the male privilege” (217).

As it is hopefully evident from my interpretation of the misogynistic and sexist attitudes of the characters, it is not simply the pressure of the society and men’s new roles that lies at the heart of such behaviours but the normative ideals of masculinity, which are frequently achieved through predatory and sexist attitudes towards women. It is the shame of failing to reach these ideals, in front of other men but also in front of women whose expectations of men are shaped by the same ideals; that is the reason preventing men from changing their attitudes. Speaking of the crisis may provoke even greater anxiety in men, and therefore may increase hostility towards women and block the achievements of feminism perceived as responsible for the ‘crisis’ in the first place. Instead of using the notion of crisis, which leads to a vicious cycle when thinking about masculinity, what is needed is a reconstruction of the traditional concepts of masculinity that are the real reasons of men’s insecurity. One of the ways for this reconstruction, as postulated by Whitehead and others in the introduction to this study, is through exposure to the complex interactions of cultural, national and transnational ideologies participating in shaping the male gender as equated to power and dominance, further imagined as phallic power or hardness. It is also crucial to hear men’s voices in these debates on masculinity to gain an understanding of how men really feel about their own gendered performance.

**Shame undermines hegemonic discourses**

In this thesis, I analysed novels of three authors, which initially appeared to be very different. However, my reading showed that the male characters in those novels reveal similar preoccupations about what does it mean to be a man at the end of the
twentieth century. In all those texts, the characters expose the inferior position of their masculinity which is contrasted with the ideal they attempt to achieve. This disparity results in a feeling of shame in the protagonists. Paradoxically, the feeling of shame frequently becomes an obstacle to belong to the realm of the desired ideal of masculinity. During this study it was shown that the protagonists expose themselves as marginalized due to their class, ethnic or gendered position, which is considered inferior to the hegemonic values represented in their societies and shame in those characters becomes the emotion that indicates this. Kureishi’s character Jay feels ashamed in front of his partner, yet soon he exposes the larger context of his shame as a lower middle class “Paki’ who grew up in a racist Britain. Roth covers his characters’ shame of failing to live up to the American ideal of manliness with Jewish shame: shame which can be more easily discerned and described in terms of internalized racism. The characters of Klimkó-Dobrzaniecki’s text struggle with the ideals of manliness in the Polish cultural context where they face contradictory discourses of masculinity. Those promoted by nationalistic discourses, such as the ideal of a heroic man, appear impossible to achieve in the debasing communist reality described by the characters. That is why the characters consult the models of masculinity outside their local and national context.

Significantly, when the writers tie discourses of class, ethnicity and national ideology to male subjectivity, they connect colonial and patriarchal order as being responsible for social inequalities and for creating ghettos of shame. My interpretation of shame in the characters demonstrates how different aspects of colonial and patriarchal heritage, using Elspeth Probyn’s expression, ‘come alive in shame’. Similarly, Sally Munt stresses how the histories of “violent domination and occupation” are “lurking” behind dynamics of shame and therefore shame has a
political potential since it “can provoke a separation between the social convention demarcated within hegemonic ideals” (4). A number of works on shame published during this doctoral project, as well as more and more studies on shame that emerged recently, indicate the particular realms of shame; these realms have been denominated by hegemonic powers, predominantly patriarchal and colonial, through a damaging ideology of exclusion on the basis of gender, race, ethnicity and class. These works, most notably Sally Munt’s *Queer Attachment*, Bewes’ *The Event of Postcolonial Shame*, or Ruth Leys’ *From Guilt to Shame: Auschwitz and After*, use shame as a key to deconstruct the old structures of power, which, however infrequently are reinstated in the present.

Kureishi’s character Jay admits to enjoying being condemned by others (*Intimacy* 127). Similarly, Alex Portnoy repeatedly commits transgressions, which result in feelings of shame and guilt in the protagonist. The entire narrative of *Everyman* revolves around his failures and that of his body, which the main protagonist has to ‘live through’ again despite being dead already. In Raz. Dwa. Trzy, all three protagonists repeatedly recall scenes when they were being shamed, humiliated and degraded by others. Accumulation of those shameful moments in the novels demonstrates the writers’ awareness of the potential of shame to queer; that is, to subvert what is imposed as normative. Shame becomes a necessary rebellion to manifest the difference and alter normality which becomes impossible for the characters. Shame is a private emotion but, at the same time, it conditions social life. Because of this status of shame as equally private and public, reading confessions of shame has a great potential to transform established truths and fossilized social constructions. Reading private shame leads us to question why shame occurs in the
first place. Hence, it becomes apparent that unexamined shame can obscure vital political connections by preventing transformation and liberation from shame.

Thanks to works such as Saul Friedländer's 2013 study on shame in Franz Kafka, *Franz Kafka: The Poet of Shame and Guilt*, and thanks to this study as well, we gain a greater understanding of how the discourses of racial, ethnic and class shame resurface in issues of the body and sexuality. The latter subject received a great deal of attention in this study, with an analysis of body images of the characters in each of the discussed novels. A close-reading of *Raz, Dwa, Trzy, Intimacy*, *Portnoy's Complaint* and *Everyman* reveals characters' preoccupation with their bodies as manifesting manliness. Frequently, sexual activity becomes the only way to assure their sexuality and virility, and the accumulation of images of the penis analyzed in this study appears a proof of it. Yet, the investigation of those images reveals, similarly to Friedländer's finding about Kafka, that the anxiety about one's sexuality, evident in the focus on sexual performance and the penis, frequently is provoked by other insecurities related to the characters' ethnic background, class position or sexuality.

The need for a new man. Final remarks

It was a goal of this study to demonstrate that shame is an emotion that has the potential to reinvent new forms of masculinity by both, acknowledging men's vulnerability and emotional lives, but also, and most importantly, by recognizing that shame has been used to introduce male hegemony in the first place. This complex relationship of two forces of shame is a key to beginning the process of building a new man. In "The Shame of Being a Man" Steven Connor points out that the male has been a privileged gender, which persists in many societies. Taking it into
consideration, a blogger Michael Urbina calls for men to recognize this privilege, in particularly, to recognize white privilege, that, in his view, is a way to become allies with women too (Urbina “101 Everyday Ways for Men to Be Allies to Women”). As Connor proposes shame may be the only way to recognize male privilege and to begin a true reconstruction of old gender norms. 122 Why is shame so vital an emotion? As emerges from this study, admitting shame means admitting to one’s vulnerability and weakness and hence, has potential to undermine one of the foundations of the traditional male gender order, which promotes denial of one’s emotions, assigning emotions as typically ‘womanly’. This takes us to another foundation of male gender as built in opposition to female gender, which in situations when masculinity is being perceived as somewhat threatened, may increase men’s hatred of women. 123 It is crucial to recognize however, that misogyny is a shield of traditional masculinity built on the constant emphasis of the difference between men and women.

Over the past three years, I have been asked whether I think my gender makes it easier for me to analyse emotions in men. There is no good answer to this question mainly because it implies the tendentious thinking that women are ‘better at emotions’, a preconception which this study attempted to challenge. Such a view recreates division between men and women but most importantly, it absolves men

122 According to Connor the reasons for men to be ashamed are as followed: “(...) I am ashamed, for example, of the advantage of having been a man, and of its arrogant privilege and prospects. I am ashamed of the will-to-manhood involved in being a man (...).I am ashamed most of all of the violence that is inseparable from being a man. We boys and men grow up in an atmosphere and the expectation of violence. (...) To continue to recognize myself as the sort of being who has accepted these conditions of violence and agreed to identify with the givers of it, is to own up that it is too late to dissolve the essential solidarity between being a man in the way I have always been and this particular kind of moral insensibility. I didn't get where I am today without being a man and so have always had it coming to me, this shame I promise I'm coming to, and nothing but shame will do, at last, for that, for me”. Connor proposes that shame is a key emotion to acknowledge those things and transform the male gender, more generally.

123 As it was discussed in the introduction, women’s emancipatory movements are often blamed for undermining men’s social position.
from the responsibility to look at themselves analytically and critically, which appears the only way of reconstructing masculinity and liberating men from having to emulate the hegemonic ideals with which they often feel uncomfortable. Preserving that kind of thinking, namely that men experience difficulty acknowledging their emotions, sustains patriarchal hegemony: it protects men from looking at themselves critically. This criticism is essential for as Bjorn Krondorfer observes "a consciously male-gendered reading is a critique of hegemonic masculinity and heteronormativity (and the concomitant social privileges bestowed upon men of certain classes) without giving up the category of "men" altogether" (5).

I would like to finish my conclusions by recalling the 2011 film *Shame* by Steve McQueen. The film presents an explicit and honest account of male shame, taking into account, and summing up many issues that have been a subject of my research over the course of three years. The film, which opens with full-frontal nude body of Brandon, played by Michael Fassbender, at the level of the plot centres on Brandon's sex addiction: obsessive masturbation, countless visits to porn websites and sexual encounters with strangers: women, men and prostitutes. Yet, in *Shame*, the director focuses precisely on the weakness and vulnerability hidden behind the mask of an adulterer by, almost invasive, exposure of Brandon's privacy. The camera accompanies the character in his most intimate activities, such as masturbation in the toilet or casual sex in the back street, focusing persistently on the emotions showing on Brandon's face. Perhaps such level of exposure of someone's privacy is needed in order to penetrate shame. *Shame* is a study of what happens to a man, who denies shame, becoming an abject to himself. After all, shame is the emotion, which provokes self-assessment. Thus, through reflecting on the judgment of the self or others that provoked the feeling of shame in the first place, we can arrive at its
source; namely, by whose values is something shameful. This enables revisiting judgments and necessary alterations of our relationship with the self and others. Brandon’s denial of emotions prevents him from building closeness and intimacy with his sister, Sissy. Symptomatic of this, he also fails to perform sexually with the only woman toward whom he developed true feelings. Avoiding revisiting or sharing the shame, protects it, which results in the self being cut off from others in a prison, which is the self paralyzed by shame, such as it is in the case of Brandon.

In the novels of Hanif Kureishi, Philip Roth and Hubert Klimko-Dobrzaniecki studied here, the protagonists refuse to be paralyzed by shame precisely by admitting to it. They address shame that is suppressing, shame which relates to their gender, class and ethnicity, and turn it into a potentially liberating emotion; by doing so, they demonstrate a postmodern attitude. They expose masculinity not yet reconstructed but queered, that which shows some cracks in its old form. Acknowledging and expressing their shame appears the first step to posting the old and reinventing the new male.
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