

*Literary Text and Masculinity Studies*

*Summary*

As part of the cultural theory, gender studies serve as a means of choice for the ongoing struggle with the established norms that shape and command various aspects of human life. The strife, it seems, will not cease any time soon since the prime generator of social dynamics is found in a claim to power and possession of the “right” image of the world. Literature, as well as arts in general, inevitably reflects the state of the world with all its faults, fissures, and oppressions. In the area of gender studies, there is more than enough space for re-thinking certain concepts which have seemed universal and unquestionable, and in a way, works of literature have helped to reveal these weaker links in gender theory. By using *Sicily and Other Travels*, a lesser-known travelogue by Serbian avant-garde author Rastko Petrović (1898–1949), this paper aims to demonstrate how a traditional, patriarchal society attempts to “straighten out” a boy whose body and behaviour deviate from the prescribed norms.

In the introductory part of the paper, the authors rely on theoretical works from various established gender theorists to offer a critical overview stressing the need for a literary-theory interface which would strengthen those views that shy away from prescriptivism in both fields of study. The dynamism found in the field of gender studies and in men’s and masculinity studies, which frequently come under fire, does not allow for passivity in this field of research. Taking this into consideration, the paper offers different strategies for unmasking the hegemonic masculinity construction, in terms of both form and literary content. It also shows how the distribution of power is enacted in language, and what ways of reading can reveal its secret dealings in a liminal identity. This is especially important in the case of alternative masculinities, as embodied in the character of the young, ill man in Petrović’s text. Therefore, a study of the construction of masculinity such as this one can significantly contribute to the theoretical area of gender studies and can also point to factors in the production of oppressive acts within a society.

*Keywords:* gender studies, men and masculinity studies, construction of masculinity, hegemonic masculinities, literary text, body, Rastko Petrović